

The Smart Power Integration Plan

Achieving national security objectives

by Capt Brent Jurmu

As a warfighting institution, the Marine Corps nests within the joint force as a forward and ready combat force. Being the smallest and most expeditionary service within the joint force, the Marine Corps largely focuses on offensive tactics and contingency readiness because of its forward posture. Considering today's global threats and the anticipated future operating environment (FOE), this offensive mindset must remain primary for Marines at every level while recognizing the Corps rarely operates unilaterally in any mission. As *Joint Publication 1* describes, "Interoperability and effective integration of service capabilities enhance joint operations to accomplish United States Government objective(s)."¹ This integration is a tradition that dates back to the Nation's founding. Marines must understand their history and the capabilities and culture of each service within the joint force.

Over two and a half millennia ago, Sun Tzu spoke of the importance of understanding direct and indirect methods of warfare. He emphasized the use of endless combinations of these methods that enable a commander to visualize victory first, before subsequently deciding the conditions required to achieve that victory. Recent military operations indicate that overmatching technology unilaterally cannot defeat adversaries whose centers of gravity do not mirror that of the technologically advanced units. The Marine Corps and joint force recognize that defeating the enemy requires more than a technological advantage, but also a comparative advantage across all dimensions, cognitive, moral, and physical.² As with

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combining direct and indirect methods of warfare, employment of smart power* can provide a myriad of interconnected yet flexible options from which to solicit a response. The Smart Power Integration Plan (SPIP) provides practical doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities solutions to supplement current guidance and influence discussions about the Marine Corps' future. Summarily, this recommended plan calls for a more deliberate approach to making every Marine and Sailor a "strategic corporal" within the context of a combat ready, forward-postured force.

The cognitive and moral dimensions of warfare transcend all levels of war itself, and the unchanging nature of war reveals the enduring necessity of human development to achieve success in warfighting. Commanders at every level must first understand the

nature of war and the human beings participating in it before committing them to combat. As Sun Tzu and others illustrated, commanders are obligated to understand how direct and indirect military and nonmilitary methods of warfare are combined to achieve victory and accomplish missions.³ Not only is smart power integration a time-tested concept and a good idea, Service and joint doctrine require it. Smart power is defined in *MCDP 1-0, Marine Corps Operations* as "the ability to selectively apply soft power [persuasive means] and hard power [coercive means] in combinations appropriate to a given situation to achieve national objectives."⁴ The concept of smart power is captured in many other publications well-known to Marines, but it is not always defined the same way. *MCDP 1, Warfighting* states, "Unity of effort is as important during the preparation for war as it is during the conduct of war."⁵ As tactical thinkers, Marines often think of their adjacent, similarly organized units when the phrase *unity of effort* is mentioned; however, it also captures the essence of smart power. When commanders consider ways to leverage all available forms of power to a situation, combat power is multiplied.

Providing timeless insight into the effectiveness of military application,

*Smart power is the use of hard and soft power in combinations to achieve desired national security outcomes. Hard power entails coercive options such as military projection, economic pressures, and technological advances. Soft power entails more persuasive measures such as diplomacy, cultural affinity, and relationship building.

Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., co-chairs of the Center for Strategic & International Studies and primary authors of the 2007 *Commission on Smart Power*, argue, “Militaries are well suited to defending states, but they are often poor instruments to fight ideas.”⁶ Throughout our history, much has been asked of the Marine Corps. From defense of the Nation to fighting ideas abroad, the Marine Corps continuously conducts operations that include routine foreign engagements, resulting in possible negative or positive effects on the Nation’s global image. Given the Marine Corps’ forward posture, smart power integration requires thoughtful consideration for mission-oriented planners and warfighters who understand every task is linked to a higher objective’s purpose. Similarly, *MCDP 1-1, Strategy* explains strategies “must strive to comprehend the nature of the problem, anticipate possible outcomes, and set a strategic course likely to achieve the desired objective.”⁷ Within the framework of *MCDP 1-1*, the SPIP follows the doctrinal framework provided by *MCDP 1-1* and serves two purposes. First, it equips Marines with the best strategies possible to accomplish assigned objectives as an instrument of national power within a whole-of-government approach. Second, to

enable Marines to better understand their roles in a particular situation and to consider the implications of their actions on the military strategy being employed and the political objectives that strategy is intended to achieve.⁸

This plan recommends the development and institutionalization of a smart power force that understands the FOE and possesses the competencies required to fight and win within it while “doing no harm” to the Nation’s global image.

Recommendation 1: Understand the Operational Environment

Historically, the Corps’ understanding of smart power integration has been reserved for Marines with specialized training in fields such as special operations, foreign military advising, civil affairs, information operations, and security cooperation. The requirement to



Marines will need to be comfortable operating in the JIM environment. (Photo by Cpl Stanley Moy)

increase the force’s cognitive capacity is widely published in joint and Service guidance; however, developmental road map to integrate the above skills and achieve the desired cognitive capacity remains unclear. Current plans to increase cognitive capacity within the general-purpose force are merely conceptual or largely ignored. To achieve this outcome, problem-solving and decision-making abilities must permeate the Corps at every level to develop the mature, professional, and cognitive force required to take on the world’s emerging challenges.

The JIM environment. Adherence to this strategy requires every Marine be familiar and comfortable operating with the joint, inter-organizational, and multinational (JIM) environment. In October 1989, a *Marine Corps Gazette* article, “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation,” accurately predicted that “success will depend heavily on effectiveness in joint operations as lines between responsibilities and mission become very blurred.”⁹ Although the DOD has developed a professional and capable joint force, this capability varies across the Services, especially at the lower levels where “jointness” occurs less frequently. Effective interoperability of the joint force requires dedication from all Services, continuous development, and readiness exercises to ensure joint force success. Although PME-com-

plete staff officers have some baseline knowledge regarding the joint force, the majority of the enlisted ranks and company-grade officers are largely joint illiterate unless they received specialty training or possess joint operational experience. The SPIP calls for a deliberate, comprehensive approach to educating all ranks on joint capabilities and the Marine Corps’ joint role to reduce uncertainty and unhelpful biases.

To be effective in the FOE, single Service stove-piping, capability monopolization, and Service tribalism must dissolve if the strength of the whole-of-government is to be fully realized. *JP 1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, “demands that the Armed Forces operate as a closely integrated team across the range of military operations ... integrating the military with all the tools of American power.”¹⁰ In addition to highlighting the need for more JIM integration and collaboration, the National Security Strategy emphasizes the need to modernize and support United States allies and partners through security assistance programs, enabling their force growth, and affirming their political will to win. In many activities worldwide, partners and allies of the United States have successfully formed stable governments and joined multinational coalitions, relegating the U.S. military into an advisory role only. These outcomes must be replicated as

sustainable solutions to achieve results beneficial for the United States.

Smart power integrated plans. Reconciliation of government strategies and military plans, such as joint regional strategies, integrated country strategies, theater campaign plans, and Service-level plans, is required to ensure a comprehensive, synchronized government effort. *Presidential Policy Directive 23* designates the State Department as the lead for all foreign policy activities. Consequently, all joint- and Service-level plans must remain nested within national-level foreign policy guidance. Apportionment, allocation, and assignment of Marine forces toward prioritized activities is more than an institutional requirement, it is a national security responsibility subservient to the United States Government civilian leadership and the will of the American people.

Additionally, all integrated strategic plans must continue to account for sufficient time and resources to properly man, train, and equip a well-supported force with a justifiable presence. Continuous and honest assessment of capabilities measured against requirements can help identify capability shortfalls where Marines can be supplemented by JIM forces and enablers. These opportunities must be constantly identified and communicated to the Services and geographic combatant commands through routine interaction across the JIM. Lastly, the Commandant's International Engagement Planning Guidance priorities must match strategically and operationally with the requirements of the combatant commander's theater campaign plans' lines of effort. Problems are most likely to occur when the Services, the joint force, and the DOD plan without representation from non-DOD organizations that can be leveraged to project smarter power.

On occasion, combatant commanders are unable to utilize the joint force, rotational forces, and other operational forces to accomplish tasks in the region because of a lack of JIM integration before, during, and after unit deployments. To mitigate this, the SPIP recommends that MCCDC become this plan's chair organization and that a smart power community of interests

(SPCOI) be established to take advantage of the Force Development Strategic Plan's (FDSP's) preexisting implementation structure which includes: strategic plan synchronization meetings, quarterly integration forums, quarterly future reviews, future force reviews, and the Marine Forces Command's quarterly force synchronization conferences to communicate and synchronize force development and employment. Regular synchronization efforts and planning forums among stakeholders will ensure effective implementation and reduce duplicative efforts.

Recommendation 2: Identify, Develop, and Sustain Required Smart Power Capabilities

Smart power integration is only attainable with the right balance of soft power skills combined with hard power to field an effective general-purpose expeditionary force. *MCDP 1-0, Marine Corps Operations* provides the foundation for how the Corps is employed to project power via "ongoing activities that establish, shape, maintain, and refine relations with other nations."¹¹ Marine forces are currently organized, trained, and equipped for specific combat-related activities across the range of military operations; however, these forces are more often involved in less

combat-related activities such as foreign military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence activities. Despite regular, peaceful engagements with foreign populations, the general-purpose force receives minimal soft power training such as interpersonal, cross-cultural communication, and negotiation skills training. With the understanding that combat readiness of every Marine remains the bedrock of the institution, a balance between focused lethality and an emphasis on soft power skills must be achieved to improve Marines' cognitive abilities and moral capacity. In terms of overall worth, the value of combat skills is difficult to measure outside military application, whereas the value of cognitive and moral development—both inside and outside the Marine Corps—cannot be overstated.

Advocacy and implementation. By nesting this plan within the next edition of the FDSP, the SPIP fills a void as a holistic, comprehensive, and institutional approach to smart power integration. Additionally, this plan recommends MCCDC be designated as the chair organization for the SPCOI, which at a minimum, should consist of the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), Marine Corps Civil Military Operations School, Marine Corps Intelligence



Smart power requires a balance between soft power shells and an effective general purpose expeditionary force. (Photo by Cpl Carlos Jimenez.)

Activity, Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG), Marine Corps Tactics & Operations Group, and the MAGTF Staff Training Program. The SPIP recommends that MCCDC utilizes the MEF information groups as satellite organizations to ensure comprehensive implementation of this strategy through regular evaluation and assessment of Operating Forces' training plans and certification exercises. This proposal also recommends that unit commanders generate local SPIPs to ensure proliferation of the SPIP across the Corps. The SPIP recommends that MCCDC assumes responsibility for ensuring SPIP updates and smart power-related policy information is regularly propagated across the service.

With the support of MCCDC and the SPCOI, each MEF information group should source personnel to assist in training and evaluating forces assigned the following missions: foreign engagement, information operations, civil affairs, partnering, foreign military advising or assistance, subject matter expert exchanges, and all security cooperation-related activities. To increase smart power capabilities across the service, the SPCOI will work to integrate existing security cooperation and language, regional expertise and culture, training and readiness events into the MAGTF planners T&R manual to minimize redundancy and maximize distribution. As stated in the FDSP, MCCDC will continue to work closely with Training & Education Command to identify redundant events and curriculum. Additionally, categorization of general smart power training designated for general-purpose forces must be distinguished from specialized smart power training earmarked for Marines with specific disciplines and responsibilities within the SPCOI. Specialized smart power content includes but is not limited to: civil affairs and information operations personnel, foreign military advisors, foreign area officers, regional area officers, foreign area SNCOs, MAGTF planners, civil affairs Marines, and operations/intelligence chiefs and officers. As with all concepts and strategies, effective advocacy and practical implementation must be sustained to cultivate and grow



A deployed MEU represents the hard power general purpose force. (Photo by LCpl Antonio Garcia.)

the smart power capabilities required to achieve success.

Expand existing capabilities. A clear understanding of hierarchy exists within certain communities such as the infantry, aviation, logistics, and others focused predominantly on combat readiness. To effectively employ smart power, the Corps' soft power organizations within the Supporting Establishment must be identified and consolidated into a networked community to best serve combat units. Consolidation of these organizations ensures innovative and mission-oriented support to combat units by offering expertise in combining direct and indirect methods of warfare.

Many soft power organizations are similar in structure, mission, and capabilities, ultimately creating a suboptimal environment for smart power integration that reduces combat effectiveness. To make matters worse, some of these organizations compete for resources and relevance which confuses the Operating Forces and reduces productivity. Intentional consolidation and reorganization into a structure similar to the Marine Special Operations Command or non-doctrinal networks, such as the Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance Enterprise, could reduce confusion, increase relevance, and ensure a refined capability is delivered to the Operating Forces. Effective or-

ganizations and enterprises should be reviewed and analyzed for the purpose of developing similar networks and procedures that improve synchronization efforts between hard power units and the soft power organizations within the Supporting Establishment. One of the more ambitious goals of the SPIP, through the SPCOI, is to consolidate control of soft power units into a single organization that oversees the implementation of several Marine Corps soft power programs.

Recommendation 3: Develop the Smart Power Force

One of the most long-term effects Marines can have on the operational environment, in terms of establishing American legitimacy abroad, is through the cultivation of meaningful relationships. Relationships developed by individual Marines support institutional efforts by contributing to partnerships at home and abroad. Programs that invest in the cognitive and moral dimensions promulgate this line of thinking by enabling the innovative spirit and institutional wisdom of the Corps.

Human aspects and maneuver warfare. MCDP 1 explains the importance of maneuver within different dimensions to gain advantages psychologically, technologically, temporally, and spatially. *The Marine Operating Concept*

(MOC) echoes this sentiment stating, “The 21st century MAGTF must be able to maneuver equally well cross-dimensionally” to achieve the above-mentioned advantages.¹² Effective maneuver requires many things but, most importantly, it requires a well-trained force capable of disrupting enemy actions through speed, focus, and decisiveness to create tempo and inflict panic and paralysis. In addition to accounting for all dimensional advantages achieved through maneuver, the Corps’ warfighting philosophy also requires disciplined preparation across all levels of warfare (strategic, operational, and tactical), an acute focus on the enemy, and a command philosophy focused on mission-type orders. The MOC’s Critical Task 6.5, Exploit the Competence of the Individual Marine, emphasizes this focus is required to build “a command culture that expects creativity and rewards initiative.”¹³ Transitioning the MOC’s energy into action requires the advancement of ethically sound, critically thinking leaders driven by a cognitive and moral obligation to invest wisely in human capital.

As a mission-focused organization that thrives in every clime and place, the Marine Corps will retain its reputation of professionalism and lethality well into the future. Like past plans and strategies, advancing the SPIP will build on this reputation by improving its ability to project expeditionary power efficiently and effectively as a member of the JIM force. This force is expected to engage foreign populations in a variety of environments across the range of military operations requiring widespread tactical expertise in culture, language, and other interpersonal skills. These smart power skills (currently taught by organizations such as CAOCL, Marine Corps Civil-Military Operations School, and Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group), include, but are not limited to: rapport building, cross-cultural communication, social perspective taking, and negotiation. Another SPIP priority is to task the SPCOI with developing a smart power curriculum in the spirit of CAOCL’s required Regional, Cultural, Language Familiarization career long PME program. Currently,

Combined arms. We must be a Lethal Force with a 21st century approach to combined arms that integrates information warfare and seeks to destroy and defeat our enemies across five domains—air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace.¹⁴

—Marine Corps Operating Concept

online Regional, Cultural, Language Familiarization training is a requirement that is tracked in military records, but to date has been limited in focus, employment, and relevance.

Using courseware and the practical skills taught at MCSCG’s Marine Advisor Course and elements of courseware from other SPCOI member-provided curriculum, the smart power curriculum should include training traditionally offered only to civil affairs teams, information operations personnel, foreign military advisors, and other specialized personnel. By making interpersonal skills required and available to all Marines, the Marine Corps will build on its capabilities as an expeditionary, forward-engaged force. This transition as an institution by increasing investment in human skills will benefit Marines beyond their time in uniform as these skills are invaluable both inside and outside the military. Ultimately, the goal of the SPIP in terms of human development is to enhance the problem-solving capacity of each Marine to accomplish a variety of personal and professional missions. Equally important is that Marines re-enter society as better citizens for having been a member of the Marine Corps family.

Expanding the idea of combined arms from combining and integrating various hard power capabilities to synchronizing these capabilities with soft power options not only reduces risk to the warfighter, it also optimizes the effects of hard power applied against a particular problem set or mission.¹⁵ As *MCDP 1-1, Strategy* illustrates, the Marine Corps requires individuals not only know their jobs but are acutely aware of the big picture and the “why” behind their actions. To incorporate refined

combined arms thought, Marine Corps soft power capabilities through their respective organizations must be incorporated into all Marine units. PME, pre-deployment training programs, and unit-level training plans should include planning exercises, case studies, and tactical decision exercises and games that focus on scenarios that incorporate hard power options in combination with soft power to achieve desired outcomes.

Challenges

There are a number of challenges to this strategy that exist and must be overcome to ensure effective implementation. Among them are a constantly changing interorganizational lexicon, an entrenched status quo culture, and enduring resource competition. These challenges are disruptive to the success of a number of Government policies and proposals, including the SPIP. For this plan to take root, understanding and reducing the effects of these challenges are important steps.

Challenge 1: A common lexicon. One challenge that disrupts progress in synchronizing efforts across the JIM environment is the lack of sufficient definitions. Each organization within the JIM environment has developed its own dialect from doctrinal philosophy to tactical phrases and jargon. This is among the most significant challenges not only to smart power integration but also for maintaining a collective understanding of strategy and planning across Government agencies.

Efforts by the State Department and the DOD with assistance from independent organizations, such as the United States Institute of Peace, have commenced to develop a lexicon that

transcends the JIM environment and includes a number of important non-governmental organizations. These efforts must be closely monitored by the Service to ensure Marine Corps input is included and advocated for in the development of this lexicon. Mitigation of this challenge will facilitate unity of effort and expand the understanding of smart power integration.

Challenge 2: Culture shift. Fear of losing individual and corporate identity is a powerful force that can result in the unrealized potential of the collective. Collaboration and exposure to other techniques, tactics, and procedures is a healthy organizational practice that leads to strength through diversity. For smart power integration to experience its full potential, the spirit of collaboration must expand across the governmental agencies and abroad to the Nation's multinational partners and allies.

Challenge 3: Resources. In a resource constrained environment disrupted further by short-term budgetary continuing resolutions, defense industry programs such as over-the-horizon amphibious assault craft, 5th generation aviation platforms, and autonomous systems all compete for budget dollars. Absent large dollar requirements and head turning contracts, the application of this plan is neither controversial nor interesting in terms of job creation or revenue generation. One of the most significant, yet simple, truths to this challenge is the SPIP cannot be constructed in a legislator's home state.

Negligible costs aside, the SPIP suggests contentious structural refinements such as consolidation of similar soft power units into one organization. Increased efficiency may not sit well in the short-term; however, increased human investment will improve processes, encourage creativity, and advance each Marine as a warfighter and member of society. Once approved and included into the next FDSP, MCCDC advocacy and SPCOI-managed refinement and implementation will be the most ideal arrangement for ensuring its success. Lastly, time is still the most valuable resource that deploying units never seem to have enough of. The necessity for creativity in stacking mission essential

tasks and prioritizing training will always be a planning challenge.

Conclusion

Service-level plans must be practical, linked to national interests, and comprised of realistic pathways to success in an uncertain world. The joint force and the Marine Corps are unified in their approach to understanding the FOE, the capabilities required to operate within it, and the type of force needed to ensure the Nation's interests are diligently pursued. As in the past, the institution realizes this force will determine its own future, not policy changes or a determined adversary. Ultimately, the SPIP recommends the force be balanced and ready, capable of building strong relationships, and devastatingly lethal when the Nation calls.

Notes

1. Joint Staff, *Joint Publication 1 (JP 1), Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, (Washington, DC: 2013).

2. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, *Multi-Domain Battle: Combined Arms for the 21st Century*, (Yorktown, VA: 2017). Outmaneuvering adversaries in the cognitive dimension is the use of information to confound the enemy's situational understanding and decision making, thereby creating advantage for the joint force.

3. Ibid. *Joint Publication 1* defines the instruments of national power as "all of the means available to the government in its pursuit of national objectives. They are expressed as diplomatic, economic, informational, and military."

4. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1-0, Marine Corps Operations*, (Washington, DC: 2011). The Marine Corps forces leverage and contribute to a larger, "whole-of-government" system of projecting "smart" power across the range of military operations. Smart power is the ability to selectively apply soft and hard power in combinations appropriate to a given situation to achieve national objectives.

5. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1, Warfighting*, (Washington, DC: 1989).

6. Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Commission on Smart Power*, (Washington, DC: The CSIS Press, 2007).

7. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1-1, Strategy*, (Washington, DC: 1997).

8. Ibid.

9. William S. Lind, Col Keith Nightengale, USA; Capt John F. Schmitt, USMC; Col Joseph W. Sutton, USA; and LtCol Gary I. Wilson, USMC, "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Quantico, VA: 1989).

10. *Joint Publication 1, Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*.

11. *MCDP 1-0, Marine Corps Operations*.

12. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operating Concept: How a Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*, (Washington, DC: 2016).

13. Ibid. Critical Task 6.5 is the bid for success for the MOC and perhaps the Marine Corps in the FOE. Without competent Marines available to implement this concept and develop a plan or strategic guidance around it, it will remain a concept and nothing more. The sub-components of Critical Task 6.5 consist of the following: 6.5.1 Seeking High-Quality Human Capital; 6.5.2 Training and Educating Marines for the Integrated Naval Force; 6.5.3 Developing Marines for Complexity; 6.5.4 Developing Leaders at Every Echelon; 6.5.5 Cultural Learning; 6.5.6 Emphasizing Quality in Leadership Positions; 6.5.7 Managing Talent to Improve Return on Training/Education Investment.

14. Ibid.

15. *Multi-Domain Battle: Combined Arms for the 21st Century*. Combining arms is the synchronized and simultaneous application of arms to achieve effect greater than if each arm was used separately or sequentially.

