Thinking Out of the Box: Reading Military Texts with a Different Perspective

SAW 2001

Subject Area History

Thinking Out of the Box:
Reading Military Texts with a Different Perspective

Major P.J. Ridderhof USMC
Future War Paper
School of Advanced Warfighting
14 May 2001

	Report Documentation Page		*Form Approved* *OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE **2001**	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-2001 to 00-00-2001**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Thinking Out of the Box: Reading Military Texts with a Different Perspective**	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **Marine Corps War College,Marine Corps University,Marine Corps Combat Development Command,Quantico,VA,22134-5067**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT **Approved for public release; distribution unlimited**

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**20**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

Executive Summary

Title: Thinking Out of the Box: Reading Military Texts with a Different Perspective.

Author: Major Phillip J. Ridderhof

Thesis: By forcing the reader into a different perspective, deconstruction of U.S. military vision documents helps clarify their content and develop potential alternatives to their central themes.

Discussion: This paper adapts deconstruction, a philosophy based in literary criticism, and uses it to analyze military vision documents. This deconstruction technique uses clues from the structure and syntax as well as the actual content to identify central and marginal ideas in the texts. By looking at the opposite of central ideas or by elevating the marginal to central, the "possibilities left out" are identified. An examination of the results from this deconstruction process will reveal useful ideas for further consideration. Two case studies are employed to demonstrate deconstruction: *Joint Vision 2010/Joint Vision 2020* and "The US Marine Corps Vision Statement"/Marine *Corps Strategy 21*.

Conclusion: Deconstruction of these two sets of vision documents results in considerations that were not apparent from a conventional reading. The deconstruction technique provides an alternate way to examine texts and allows the reader to develop critical and creative ideas from those readings.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

"...Persuasive in peace, decisive in war, preeminent in any form of combat."[1] With these goals in mind, and with the constant use of terms such as "full-dimensional," "full spectrum," "dominance" and "dominant," *Joint Vision 2010(JV 2010)* and its extension, *Joint Vision 2020 (JV 2020),* paint a persuasive picture of where United States military forces should head as we move into the first half of the 21st Century. Individual service vision documents, such as *Marine Corps Strategy 21,* follow the lead of the joint documents in proclaiming bold capabilities within their specific competencies. By the terms of these vision documents, the U.S. military will be able to go anywhere and do everything. Realistically, that is not possible, but a reader is hard pressed to discern alternatives just from the texts. There seems to be a sentence or phrase that covers every eventuality of future conflict. This sort of impression can lead to the accusation that the vision statements are pablum, saying nothing by saying everything. An adaptation of Deconstruction, a technique of reading that grew out of the philosophy of the same name, can provide an analytical method that will help explicate vision documents. *By forcing the reader into a different perspective, deconstruction of U.S. military vision documents helps clarify their content and develop potential alternatives to their central themes.*

II. Deconstruction and the Vision Text

Broadly defined, Deconstruction is a postmodern philosophy that denies the existence of true meaning for texts. A text is anything that can be intellectually analyzed such as a book, a film, or an activity. Rather than "true" meanings in texts, there are just meanings that continually interact in different ways and are totally dependent on perspective. To deconstruct a text is to closely analyze it, not for its central themes, but for the marginalized themes and those themes that are "unsaid." These marginal and unsaid themes are then developed as the central themes. The text is turned on its head. Deconstruction takes this method to the extreme by destroying the

supports for central versus marginal meanings. There are just different meanings with arbitrary prioritization.[2] To usefully analyze military vision documents necessitates a retreat from Deconstruction's nihilistic goals.

To get at marginal and "unsaid" themes, the first step is to clearly identify the central themes. To do this, how something is said is as important as what is actually said. Military vision documents are written in the active voice with strong verbs and modifiers. Central ideas can be identified by the repetition of words or phrases especially when placed as section titles, quotes in supporting graphics or conclusion sentences of paragraphs. The organization of the text also exposes central ideas. Vision documents tend to contain two patterns of writing: first, addressing the main point up front and following with supporting material, and second, arraying the supporting material as a building argument that climaxes with the main point. Both of these patterns can be used simultaneously at different levels. For example, the overall structure of the text may be that of an argument building to a conclusion, while individual subsections are structured as main ideas followed by supporting information. By identifying the repetition of key phrases, closely examining the patterns of the writing and the placement of ideas within the patterns, the central themes are fairly easy to pick out.

The central ideas of vision texts can be divided into three conceptual parts: the foundation, the endstate and the method. The foundation sets the starting point for the vision. The foundation of a vision document has two parts. One part is an articulation of the assumptions about the future security environment. This articulation can have inward focused aspects, such as future U.S. national goals, interests and policies, and outward focused aspects, such as the direction of technological development and the potential adversaries of the future. The second part of the foundation is a description of where the organization is presently. This description can consist of capabilities or current employment concepts, but it usually focuses on character traits,

such as aspects of heritage and "enduring values" that embody the spirit of the organization. The endstate sets the ultimate goal for the vision. The vision text's endstate describes the specific organizations, required capabilities and operational concepts that the military will need in order to successfully cope with the future laid out in the foundation. The endstate is usually somewhat vague and focuses on concepts and capabilities rather than actual unit structures or material systems. The method is the "how" portion of the vision. The method portion describes the path that the organization will take to build on the present force described in the foundation to reach the force envisioned by the endstate. The method is usually couched in terms of attitudes towards change and the relative importance of various aspects of expected change. By analyzing the text into these three parts, the central ideas are arranged in a coherent manner.

While the text may be explicitly structured as foundation, endstate and method, central ideas are also repeated throughout the text. For instance, certain portions of the foundation will be repeated in the endstate portion in order to highlight the endstate's logic. Likewise, the endstate will be addressed in the method portion in order to show the linkage between the two. This repetition makes the central ideas mutually supportive and easier to identify.

Although harder to identify, marginal ideas are also part of the text, but secondary to the central ideas. Sometimes the only identifiable differences between marginal and central in the text are slight shades of meaning and emphasis. A close examination of the structure of the text and the use of certain grammatical devices is crucial in determining the marginal ideas. Marginal ideas are usually couched as caveats, or qualifiers, to central ideas. Phrases such as, "While XXX can never be discounted..." or "Also important is XXX," are good clues that XXX is a marginal idea. The relative order of ideas and the strength of their modifiers (adjectives or adverbs) can also give clues as to what is marginal. A long list of disparate ideas, seemingly tacked onto the end of a section of text, is usually an indication that those ideas are of lesser priority or,

marginal. Similar to central ideas, marginal ideas are often repeated throughout the text. Marginal ideas represent themes that while not central, are still important enough to address in the text.

Obviously, the "unsaid" themes or ideas do not show up at all in the text. Because a vision document is designed to describe a future, the term "possibilities left out" may be better than "unsaid" ideas. In either case, it is an awkward concept to communicate. There are two techniques to help determine the possibilities left out: determine the opposite of certain central ideas, especially from the foundation, or elevate some marginal ideas to the status of central ideas. The development of the possibilities left out is fraught with pitfalls. There is a real risk of unreality in some of the suppositions. For example, that technological progress would stop is a possibility left out from a central idea dependent on new technology. That it is theoretically possible does not make it realistic or very useful. This deconstruction technique, however, may reveal possibilities that while not probable, are worth consideration.

The last step of deconstruction is a synthesis. The text has been broken into three categories: the central themes, the marginal themes and the possibilities left out. While examination of the central themes may allow the reader to have a better appreciation of what the text actually said, the study of the marginal and left out that may provide the most enlightening considerations. All three categories, however, should be examined together to see what ideas they inspire. Those synthesized thoughts are where the pain of deconstruction should pay off.

III. Case Study: *JV2010* and *JV2020*

Of the U.S. military vision documents, *JV 2010* and *JV 2020* are the most appropriate initial case study. The two joint vision documents address U.S. military power as a whole. In contrast, service visions intentionally marginalize and leave out possibilities due to limitations of

service roles. Service visions should also fit under the *JV 2010/2020* conceptual umbrella. By deconstructing the joint texts first, the necessary groundwork is laid for subsequent examination of the service visions.

The joint vision texts must be considered as one whole divided into two parts. Of the two, *JV 2020* is the most current, but it is more an addendum or extension of *JV 2010* than a stand-alone document. Rather than having a detailed foundation, *JV 2020* relies on *JV 2010's* foundation. In fact, the *JV 2010* endstate, as a vision of the force in 2010, is in its entirety part of the foundation for *JV 2020.* Treating the two texts as a whole renders a more complete listing of marginal ideas and left out possibilities. In fact, some of the more interesting points gleaned from the deconstruction of both documents are the modifications that come with *JV 2020*.

JV 2010 reflects a foundation of evolutionary change in the future where U.S. interests and strategy do not significantly change in the coming years. Technology will be decisive and will continue to change along its present lines, enabling more precision in weapons, mobility for forces and most importantly, a great increase in information available to forces, both about themselves and the enemy. The international environment will also be a continuation of current trends. There will be uncertainty and the U.S. will have to be prepared to simultaneously deal with a wide range of state and non-state adversaries. The United States will continue to pursue its present policies of ensuring security for its people and possessions, promoting domestic prosperity and democracy worldwide. The U.S. military will continue to be primarily a warfighting organization. America's military is, and will be, a military of quality personnel. The military will continue to have technological superiority, but there will not be a large increase in resources in the future.[3] *JV 2020* reflects the same foundation with one important exception. With the rapid pace of worldwide change, U.S. forces cannot assume technological superiority

against its foes. This is especially true where there are asymmetrical options open that could neutralize any technological advantage.[4]

The endstates of *JV 2010* and *JV 2020* are basically the same. The U.S. military of the future will be a warfighting force that is small, protected, mobile, sustainable and precisely lethal. It will be able to react rapidly throughout the world and will mass its effects rather than massing physically. *JV 2020* only differs from *JV 2010* by a matter of superlatives: smaller, more protected, more mobile, etc. The overarching concept of both the *JV 2010* and *JV 2020* forces is "full spectrum dominance": the ability to fight anywhere with sufficient superiority to defeat any foe with minimal loss to ourselves.[5]

The methods of *JV 2010* and *JV 2020* are different from each other. However, there are the same two elements to each. Those elements are the development of technology and the development of the human element, such as the organizations, tactics, and leadership. *JV 2010's* method is to exploit the U.S. advantage in technology combined with our constant characteristic of superior personnel.[6] In line with its shift in foundation, *JV 2020's* method emphasizes innovations in the human element in order to overcome a potentially neutral balance in technology. This shift in methods is subtle, but it is continuously repeated throughout *JV 2020.* The emphasis in the text suggests that this shift could be the primary reason that *JV 2020* was produced.[7]

With the central themes developed, the next step is to identify the marginal themes. There are three significant marginal themes in *JV 2010:* the impact of fog and friction on operations, the need for large physical presence forces, and the conduct of Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). When it does mention fog and friction, *JV 2010* depreciates their effects through the anticipated application of technology (the use of Italics in the following quotes is my emphasis and not the original text's):

6

"While friction and fog of war can never be eliminated, new technology promises to *mitigate* their impact."[8]

"Although this will not eliminate the fog of war, dominant battlespace awareness will improve situational awareness, decrease response time and *make the battlespace considerably more transparent* to those who achieve it".[9]

Fog and friction as marginal concepts are refuted in *JV 2020.*

"Information Superiority neither equates to perfect information nor does it mean the elimination of the fog of war."[10] [This quote states the inability to eliminate friction as a positive statement and not a qualified statement as found in *JV 2010.*]

The recognition of fog and friction in *JV 2020* is representative of that document's shift from an emphasis on technology to an emphasis on the human element in conflict.

The second marginal concept of *JV 2010* is the need for large physical presence forces. Such forces are always referred to in statements where they are the exception to the expected norm of future operations:

"In the past, our capabilities often required us to physically mass forces to neutralize enemy power."[11]

"…Extensive physical presence *may* later be necessary to accomplish the assigned mission."[12]

JV 2020 does not mention physical presence as a significant marginal concern, but it does not refute *JV 2010* either. It is clear that for the smaller, mobile force of the future, being able to physically mass is a secondary concern.

The third marginal concept of *JV 2010* is MOOTW. Although MOOTW considerations are present throughout the text, they are always secondary to warfighting considerations:

"In addition we should expect to participate in a broad range of deterrent, conflict prevention and peacetime activities."[13]

"Other operations, from humanitarian assistance in peacetime through peace operations in a near hostile environment, have proved to be possible using forces *optimized* for wartime effectiveness."[14]

JV 2020 continues in regarding MOOTW as a marginal concept:

"It *also* includes those ambiguous situations presiding between peace and war…"[15]

"Achieving full-spectrum dominance means that the joint force will fulfill its *primary* purpose- victory in war, *as well as* achieving success across the range of operations,…"[16]

MOOTW clearly comes up second behind warfighting in both texts.

In addition to MOOTW, *JV 2020* follows up *JV 2010* with three other marginal concepts that are not present in *JV 2010:* a focus on technological innovation, information superiority, and multinational/interagency operations. The marginalization of technology is in line with *JV 2020's* central idea in its foundation that the U.S. cannot assume technological superiority in the future:

"Realization of the full potential of these changes requires *not only* technological improvement, but the continued evolution of organizations and doctrine..."[17][The technical improvements represent the previous emphasis of *JV 2010.*]

"Although technical interoperability is essential, *it is not sufficient* to ensure effective operations."[18]

"Our thinking about command and control must be *conceptually* based, *rather* than focused on technology and material."[19]

By marginalizing technology, *JV 2020* seeks to redress an imbalance towards technology contained in *JV 2010.*

JV 2020's marginalization of information superiority goes hand in hand with that of technology. *JV 2010* held up information superiority as an essential force multiplier for the endstate military. *JV 2020* subsumes information superiority underneath the concept of "decision dominance." Information superiority is only one part, and not the most important part of decision dominance.

"The creation of information superiority *is not* an end in itself."[20]

"While changes in the information environment have *led some to focus solely* [*JV 2010*] on the contribution of information superiority to command and control, it is *equally necessary* to understand the complete realm of command and control decision making, the nature of organizational collaboration, and *especially,* the 'human in the loop.'"[21]

JV 2020 marginalizes information superiority by creating an additional overarching central concept that includes non-technology-based elements,

The last marginal concept of *JV 2020* is multinational and interagency operations. Multinational operations are an insignificant marginal concept in *JV 2010* while interagency

operations are barely mentioned. In *JV 2020,* however, both concepts are discussed at some length, but always marginal to the central idea of unilateral joint military action.

"... To coordinate military operations, *as necessary,* with government agencies and international organizations."[22]

"The joint force of 2020 will integrate protective capabilities from multinational and interagency partners *when available* and will respond to their requirements *when possible.*"[23] [There is no expectation that this will be routine.]

Similar to MOOTW, multinational and interagency operations are addressed as a secondary, even if important, consideration for the future military force.

Beyond the marginal ideas are those possibilities left out. With one exception, *JV 2010* and *JV 2020* have the same major absences: the possibility of a major change in U.S. National goals and interests, the possibility of a single peer competitor emerging, and the possibility of the primary focus of the military shifting from warfighting to MOOTW. The exception possibility is that *JV 2010* leaves out the possibility of human considerations, such as doctrine and organization, leading technology as an approach to developing future forces. *JV 2020* eliminates this left out possibility by making it a central theme in its text. Of the three remaining concepts, a change to national interests and the rise of a peer competitor were developed by considering the opposite of central ideas from the joint visions (that of the continuity of U.S. national interests and the proposition of a host of state and non-state adversaries). Turning MOOTW from a marginal to a central idea develops MOOTW as a primary concept. In evaluating these three possibilities left out, a change to U.S. national interest is very unlikely within the context of the joint visions. *JV 2010* defines U.S. national interests so broadly, ensuring security of U.S. people and possessions, promoting domestic prosperity and worldwide democracy,[24] that it is hard to imagine other interests that would take their place. There may be a difference in emphasis, but there is no reasonable opposite. With MOOTW and a peer competitor, however, each may be

9

improbable, but neither is out of the realm of possibility. Inclusion of any of the three concepts would substantially change the central themes of both joint visions.

Does deconstruction of JV 2010/2020 result in any points worth pondering? I offer three considerations from this case study:

1.   There is a shift in emphasis from technology over the human in *JV 2010* to the reverse in *JV 2020*. *JV 2020* binds itself so closely to *JV 2010* that this shift is hard to recognize. The shift may be so subtle that it was not a wholly planned, but simply the result of different authors and writing styles. This subtlety, however, may lead many to assume that neither text says anything very different from the other. *JV 2020*'s shift in philosophy is an important concept that should be highlighted and clearly understood.

2.   Both joint visions make MOOTW a secondary priority to warfighting. MOOTW, however, is what U.S. forces currently spend most of their time executing. As a corollary, large physical presence forces are not envisioned in the small, mobile force of the future, yet they are well suited to many of the "human intensive" MOOTW missions. Some thought could be given to creating, within the services, a primarily MOOTW force that is relatively larger in personnel, but less endowed with agility and precision.

3.   *JV 2010/2020* forecasts a force that is billed as being able to go anywhere and fight anyone as opposed to a specific foe. Realistically, there will be some limitations with such a general-purpose approach. There may be value to creating competing joint visions, each focused on a different potential major adversary such as China or a resurgent Russia. These visions would be more than operational plans that take in-place forces and employ them. Rather they would reflect designing the entire joint force from the ground up in order to best meet and defeat these foes. These "hedge" visions would still be marginal to *JV 2020,* but they could be a wellspring for ideas,

IV. Case Study: "The Vision Statement of the U.S. Marine Corps" and *Marine Corps Strategy 21*

The Marine vision texts consist of "The Vision Statement of the U.S. Marine Corps" (USMC Vision Statement), originally released as a naval message, and *Marine Corps Strategy 21 (MC Strategy 21)*. "USMC Vision Statement" is actually embedded, word for word, on the first page of MC *Strategy 21*. I treat the entire message as a separate source because the explanatory notes shed significant light on both texts. The Marine texts explicitly claim to support *JV 2010/2020.*[25] Deconstruction of the Marine vision will include analysis relative to the joint texts.

The foundation is the single largest section of *MC Strategy 21* (four of a total nine pages). This emphasis on foundation is a clue to the key central idea in the Marine texts: that the current status of the Marine Corps already contains the correct model for the future:

"The GOFG [General Officers Futures Group] concluded that the Corps requires only marginal adjustments to successfully adapt [for the future]. We do, in fact, have it right."[26]

The Marine texts' foundation reflects a national security environment similar to that of the joint visions. The U.S. is likely to face both state and non-state actors in conflicts across the spectrum. In this chaotic atmosphere, conventional war will be the exception to many lesser contingencies (MOOT W).[27] Although not explicitly stated, it is safe to assume that the Marines would recognize the same national interests as contained in *JV 2010:* ensuring domestic security and prosperity and promoting worldwide democracy. "The USMC Vision Statement" does add the more detailed concept that:

"Opportunities and challenges in the world's littoral regions will increase America's reliance on the continuous forward presence and sustainable maritime power projection of naval expeditionary forces."[28]

While this statement is not at odds with anything in *JV 2010/2020,* neither is it supported by any passages in the joint texts. This statement reflects an expected maritime bias. The current status

of the organization is that the present Marine Corps is a force of high quality people that provides combatant commanders with mission tailored Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs). These MAGTFs, are able to deal with a large range of crises and contingencies across the spectrum of conflict through forward presence and/or quick strategic response.[29]

The endstate in the Marine vision texts is strikingly similar to the current status outlined in the foundation:

> "The Marine Corps will enhance its strategic agility, operational reach, and tactical flexibility to enable joint, allied, and coalition operations and interagency coordination. These capabilities will provide combatant commanders with scalable, interoperable, combined-arms Marine Air-Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) to shape the international environment, respond quickly to the complex spectrum of crises and conflicts, and gain access or prosecute forcible entry operations."[30]

This endstate further confirms the central idea of improvement of the current force vice transformation to a new type of force. The Marine endstate force is very much an amphibious version of the joint endstate force. The *JV 2010/2020* endstate force was to be smaller, protected, mobile, sustainable, precisely lethal, able to react rapidly throughout the globe and characterized by massing its effects rather than physically. The Marines do not really address precise lethality or massing effects, but the passages related to improving operational reach and tactical flexibility could be interpreted to cover those two joint concepts. The Marine texts do not support any concepts that would be contrary to any of the joint concepts. The Marine texts may not match the joint texts adjective for adjective, but the improved MAGTFs fit well within the *JV 2010/2020* parameters.

The method espoused in the Marine vision texts is one of evolution and improvement. The Marine method emphasizes the continued development and retention of quality personnel through reliance on traditional concepts such as core values and a warrior ethic, and improving operational capabilities by "optimizing" current structure and "capitalizing" on innovation.[31] *JV 2010/2020* worked on the two concepts of technology and "human" elements (doctrine,

organization). The Marine vision texts are not explicit in their emphasis between these two aspects, but seem to better match *JV 2020,* with an emphasis on concepts and organizations and relatively less about the impact of new technologies.[32] The prevalent verbs in the Marine vision texts are "enhance," "evolve," and "expand."[33] The central idea of the Marine method is improvement of the present MAGTF concept, not significant change to an alternate concept.

With the central ideas established, the marginal ideas can be pulled from the text. There is only one significant marginal idea in the Marine vision texts: sustained conventional combat operations are a secondary priority to other deterrence and contingency operations at the lower end of the conflict spectrum (MOOTW). The style of the Marine texts is to arrange potential employment options and capabilities in lists. Fighting battles always arrives at the end of these lists, sometimes with a qualifier, sometimes without.

> "These forces will promote national interests, influence vital regions, and fight and win the nation's battles."[34]

> "Every Marine and Marine unit is ready to rapidly task organize, deploy, and employ from CONUS or while forward deployed to respond and contain crises or, i*f necessary,* to immediately engage in sustained combat operations."[35]

> "Throughout our Nation's history, Marines have responded to national and international brushfires and crises and, *when necessary,* war."[36]

> "As an expeditionary, task-organized, combined arms force with superb small-unit leaders, we are prepared to promote peace and stability or, i*f required,* defeat our Nation's adversaries..."[37]

> "Multiple belligerents and a blurring of distinctions and national affiliations among terrorist groups, subnational factions, insurgent groups, and international criminals will complicate an environment where *a direct attack is often the least likely course of action."[38]

While the Marine texts' marginalization of major combat operations only appears as a question of likelihood, not necessarily excluding such operations, it is a trend that significantly differs from *JV 2010/2020.* Both of the joint texts emphasize the opposite: warfighting over other operations. Regarding some of the other marginal ideas from the joint texts, the Marine texts do not directly address the issue of fog and friction or large physical presence forces. Marine warfighting doctrine, which is upheld in *MC Strategy 21,* agrees with *JV 2020* that fog and

friction are an inherent part of conflict and cannot be marginalized.[39] The Marine emphasis on

maritime forces could be inferred to marginalize the need for large physical presence forces on

land, but it begs the question of the size of those maritime forces. The relative marginalization of

Major Theater War (MTW) in favor of MOOTW and other lesser crises, is the only distinct

marginal idea.

Three "possibilities left out" present themselves. The first is a reversal of the

marginalization of major combat operations. This possibility would be a vision that emphasizes

the Marine Corps' role in warfighting at the possible expense of its ability to maintain forward

presence or respond to small-scale contingencies. The second major possibility left out of the

Marine vision texts is that of an endstate force that is radically different from the present day

MAGTF concept. This possibility counters the contention in the Marine texts that modification

and not transformation is the appropriate path. The last possibility left out of the Marine texts

mirrors one from *JV 2010/2020:* designing the Marine Corps to meet the threat of a specific

future peer competitor.

From this deconstruction, I offer three considerations:

1. One consideration from the deconstruction of *JV 2010/2020* was that the U.S. military might

want to develop a "hedge" capability to address MOOTW. The Marine Corps seems to be

offering itself as that capability and may want to commit to further develop itself in this

direction. This path could reduce the Marines' contribution to MTW situations, but it would

increase their utility in what is apparently the most prevalent form of future military

employment.[40]

2. The Marine Corps should look to revolution as well as evolution. The present direction may be

correct, but it should not stifle development and experimentation of concepts that do not involve

the MAGTF as we know it. These concepts could involve the elimination or severe

diminishment of differing legs of the MAGTF in order to allocate more resources to the remaining legs. The MAGTF should not be a limiting concept.

3. The Marine Corps may want to develop visions that are specifically suited to fight a future peer adversary.[41] These visions, if carried far enough, may lead to the development of new ideas and capabilities that could also be useful in a more generic sense.

V. Conclusion

None of the three previous considerations from the two case studies are complete results in their own right. They may not prove to be feasible. They were not obvious to me, however, when I began my examination of the joint and Marine vision documents. Deconstruction provided me with a method with which to closely analyze the texts and generate ideas for further study. Officers are continually encouraged to "think out of the box." It is difficult, however, to break out of your own established perspective. Deconstruction helps the reader do this by forcing a different sort of analysis. With some alterations, the deconstruction technique can also be used on other military texts, such as doctrinal publications. Although probably not organized like a vision text, the central ideas of doctrinal texts would still reveal themselves. The marginal ideas could lead to intelligent critiques because similar to vision statements, doctrine is sometimes considered weak and too broadly written. Deconstruction reveals ideas and themes in a text that may not be apparent in a conventional reading. The reader is forced to think outside of what the text presents as central and consider the role of the marginal and "left out." Deconstruction is a valuable tool for military readers because it drives critical and creative thinking.

---

[1]   *Joint Vision 2010 (JV 2010),* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1996), 2+34.
        Joint Vision 2020 (JV 2020), (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 2000), 2+45.

15

---
[2]   Glenn Ward, *Teach Yourself Postmodernism,* (Chicago IL: NTC/Contemporary Publishing, 1997), 94-101. Deconstruction is credited to the French philosopher, Jacques Derrida. The primary texts on deconstruction are difficult to wade through. For my purposes an introductory text is suitable.

[3]   *JV 2010,* 1-34. (The textual sources for the summarized central themes are located throughout each of the texts.)

[4]   *JV 2020,* 1-45.

[5]   *JV 2010,* 1-34.
     JV 2020, 1-45.

[6]   *JV 2010,* 1-34.

[7]   *JV 2020,* 1-45.

[8]   *JV 2010,* 16.

[9]   *JV 2010,* 13.

[10]   *JV 2020,* 12.

[11]   *JV 2010,* 17.

[12]   *JV 2010,* 27.

[13]   *JV 2010,4.*

[14]   *JV 2010,* 17.

[15]   *JV 2020,* 8.

[16]   *JV 2020,* 9.

[17]   *JV 2020,* 12.

[18]   *JV 2020,21.*

[19]   *JV 2020,* 40.

[20]   *JV 2020,* 11.

[21]   *JV 2020,38.*

[22]   *JV 2020,5.*

[23]   *JV 2020,* 33.

[24]   *JV 2010,3.*

[25]   *Marine Corps Strategy 21,* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2001), 5.

[26]   Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) message to All Marines (ALMAR) 42/00, subject: "The Vision Statement of the United States Marine Corps," 152000Z November 2000.

[27]   *MC Strategy 21,* 4-5.

[28]   CMC ALMAR 42/00.

[29]   *MC Strategy 21,* 2,3,5.

[30]   CMC ALMAR 42/00.
     MC Strategy 21, 1.

[31]   *MC Strategy 21,* 6-8.

[32]   *MC Strategy 21,* 6-8. Of the thirty "aims" deployed, ten could be considered primarily human based, seven are technology based and thirteen are a combination of technology and human elements.

[33]   *MC Strategy 21,* 6-8.

[34]   CMC ALMAR 42/00.
     MC Strategy 21, 1.

[35]   *MC Strategy 21,2.*

[36]   *MC Strategy 2l,3.*

[37]   *MC Strategy 2l,5.*

[38]   *MC Strategy 2l,5.*

[39]   Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1 *Warfighting,* (Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, June 1997), 5-9.
     MC Strategy 21, 9.

[40]   This MTW/MOOTW argument has some similarities to the USMC struggle in the 1920's and 30's concerning amphibious warfare versus colonial infantry.

[41]   The USMC development of amphibious warfare owed a large part of its momentum to planning for a war with Japan.

Bibliography

Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC). Message to All Marines (ALMAR) 42/00. Subject: "The Vision Statement of the United States Marine Corps." 152000Z November 2000.

Joint Vision 2010. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, July1996.

Joint Vision 2020. Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, June 2000.

Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP 1) 1 *Warfighting.* Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, June 1997.

Marine Corps Strategy 21. Washington D.C.: Headquarters United States Marine Corps, 2001.

Ward, Glenn. *Teach Yourself Postmodernism.* Chicago IL: NTC/ Contemporary Publishing, 1997.