The Blue Diamond and Operational Art: Vietnam, 1969-1971

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

The Blue Diamond and Operational Art, Vietnam: 1969-1971, by Maj Jon K. Wilkins, US Marine Corps, 57 pages.

The field of study for this monograph is military history and the use of operational art at the division level. A critical component to the case studies selected concerns the idea that operational art is a way of thinking, and therefore, is neither restricted to a particular echelon of command nor a level of war. This study seeks to answer the following research question: How did the 1st Marine Division organize tactical actions in time, space, and purpose to achieve strategic objectives from 1969 through early 1971 in the I Corps Tactical Zone/Military Region 1 during the Vietnam War? The monograph proposes this thesis: From 1965 through 1971, III MAF conducted counterinsurgency operations in the I Corps Tactical Zone—re-designated Military Region 1 in July 1970. The 1st Marine Division successfully conducted operational art in the Quang Nam Province (within the I Corps Tactical Zone) to buy time and space to prepare the Army of the Republic of Vietnam for future operations. President Richard Nixon's policy of Vietnamization forced a premature transition between 1st Marine Division units and Army of the Republic of Vietnam units, denying them sufficient time to train, advise, and assist the Army of the Republic of Vietnam to prepare them to conduct independent offensive operations, as demonstrated by the failure of Operation Lam Son 719 in March 1971.

The research focused on three different types of primary source documents. First, the 1969 and 1970 Command Histories of the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam were consulted to identify the US strategic military objectives in Vietnam. Second, the monthly Operation Summaries for US Marine Forces in Vietnam from 1969 through 1971 were used to uncover how the 1st Marine Division organized tactical actions in time, space, and purpose. Third, operation orders were used, when available, to reveal the end state, mission, and scheme of maneuver for named, large-scale operations. To make the argument, this monograph utilizes the case study methodology. The monograph is organized into seven sections: introduction, literary review, case study methodology, case study one, case study two, findings and analysis, and conclusion.

Contents

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Acronyms

ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AO	Area of Operation
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
BA	Base Area
CARL	Combined Arms Research Library
CAP	Combined Action Program
CUPP	Combined Unit Pacification Program
CCP	Combined Campaign Plan
CONUS	Continental United States
CRIMP	Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Plan
CTZ	Corps Tactical Zone
C2	Command and Control
GVN	Government of South Vietnam
HN	Host Nation
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JGS	Joint General Staff
KS	Kansas
LOE	Line of Effort
LOO	Line of Operation
MACV	Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MAGTF	Marine-Air-Ground Task Force
MAF	Marine Amphibious Force
MARDIV	Marine Division
MAW	Marine Air Wing
MCDP	Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication

MEB	Marine Expeditionary Brigade
MR	Military Region
NSAM	National Security Action Memorandum
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
OE	Operational Environment
OJT	On-the-job Training
RF	Regional Forces
PF	Popular Forces
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
RVNAF	Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
TAOR	Tactical Area of Responsibility
VC	Viet Cong
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure

Illustrations

Introduction

> In the context of wars amongst the people, commanders at all levels must fit the execution of short-term operations into a larger operational design, and this design must link their near-term actions to the strategic aim of the campaign.
>
> —US Department of the Army, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500

In March 1965, the US Marine Corps (USMC) sent the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) to Vietnam to fight the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) in the I Corps Tactical Zone (CTZ), the northern most zone in Vietnam. By May 1965, 9th MEB became the III Marine Amphibious Force (MAF), which consisted of the 1st Marine Division (MARDIV), the 3rd MARDIV, and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW). In late 1969, the 3rd MARDIV began redeployment to Okinawa, Japan, thus leaving the 1st MARDIV as III MAF's primary ground combat element. It is this unit—the 1st MARDIV—that will be the focus of study in this monograph.

There is a gap in research concerning 'operational art' and 1st MARDIV operations in the I CTZ during the Vietnam War. More specifically, the number of named operations that occurred from 1969 through 1971 in the I CTZ is staggering, which begs the question: Were these operations logically connected to the strategic objectives? Additionally, did the 1st MARDIV use operational art to account for and then sequence the many different tasks associated with transitioning security, both internal and external, of the I CTZ from USMC forces to host nation (HN) security forces? In short, this gap (or problem) is worth follow-on study and analysis.

Given the aforementioned problem, the purpose of this study is to fill this gap in research. To focus the research effort, this study used the following thesis: From 1965 through 1971, III MAF conducted counterinsurgency operations in the I CTZ—re-designated Military Region (MR) 1 in July 1970. The 1st MARDIV successfully conducted operational art in the Quang Nam Province (within the I CTZ) to buy time and space to prepare the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) for future operations. President Richard Nixon's policy of Vietnamization

forced a premature transition between 1st MARDIV units and ARVN units, denying them sufficient time to train, advise, and assist the ARVN to prepare them to conduct independent offensive operations, as demonstrated by the failure of Operation Lam Son 719 in March 1971.

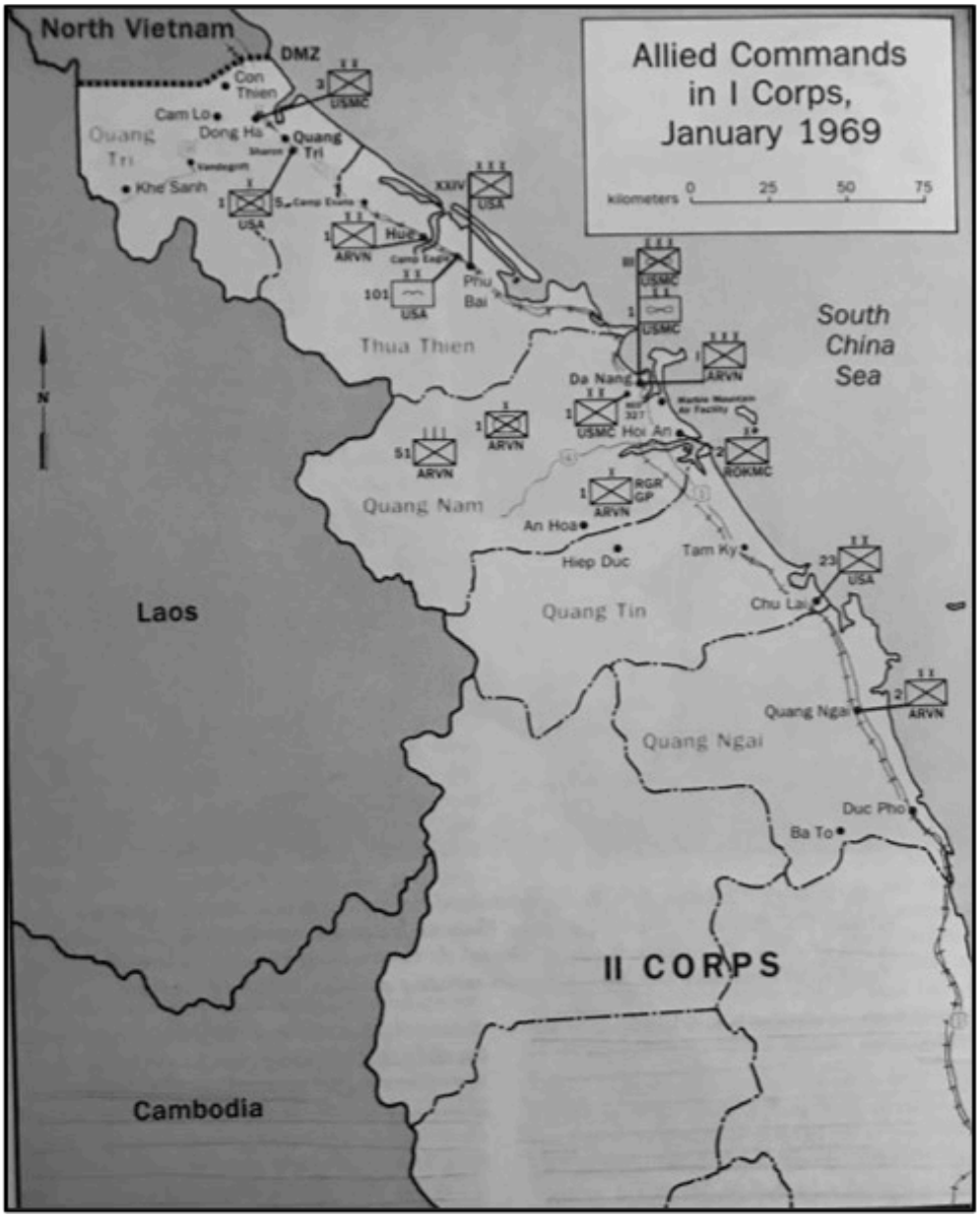

Figure 1. The Allied Commands in I Corps, January 1969. Charles R. Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown, 1969* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), 4.

The significance of this study pertains to the connection between operational art and planning for the transition of security between US military forces and HN security forces during a war for limited aims. This is particularly relevant when a new US president displays a predilection to abruptly change the course of the war once in the oval office (e.g., Nixon in Vietnam, Obama in Iraq, etc.). The failure to plan for this transition because of the temptation to ignore it while conducting combat operations is an issue this monograph seeks to highlight. More importantly, this monograph will contain a historical example at the division level that may help future military commanders avoid this costly misstep. Awareness of this misstep, while critical, is not enough. Instead, future military commanders will benefit most when they consider combat and transition tasks together as tactical actions and then arrange them in time, space, and purpose to achieve the strategic objectives.

There are two key terms used throughout this study that warrant clear definition from the outset: operational art and counterinsurgency. Since the USMC does not define operational art in its doctrinal publications, this study will use the US Army's definition from Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Operations*, which is "the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose."[1] This definition is useful because current USMC doctrine does state that "[t]hrough the campaign plan, the commander fuses a variety of disparate forces and tactical actions, extended over time and space, into a single, coherent whole."[2] Moreover, "[c]ampaign design begins with the military strategic aim."[3] Simply put, justification for the use of the US Army's definition of operational art in this study is found in Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-2, *Campaigning*,

[1] US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2016), 2-1.

[2] US Department of the Navy, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-2, *Campaigning* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997), 35.

[3] Ibid.

which demands that its operational-level planners use the concept (not the term) when developing a campaign plan. The term counterinsurgency is defined in MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*, as "[c]omprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes."[4] Moreover, using this definition, MCDP 1-0 also emphasized that "[p]olitical power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate."[5] Thus, the ultimate, or most important, struggle in South Vietnam will be between the Government of South Vietnam (GVN) and the shadow government backed by North Vietnam.

The theoretical framework used throughout this study is operational art. All primary source documents from the 1st MARDIV, III MAF, the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), and the US government will be analyzed through this lens. Texas Tech University has archived the vast majority of the primary source documents relevant to this study. When viewed through the lens of operational art, the relevant primary source documents will reveal the linkage (or lack thereof) between tactical actions and strategic objectives as it relates to the 1st MARDIV operating in the I CTZ/MR 1 from 1969 through early 1971.

This study will rely on two hypotheses to test the thesis. The first hypothesis asserts that when the 1st MARDIV used operational art to nest strategic military objectives and tactical actions they were able to create time and space to achieve the strategic objectives. The second hypothesis proposes that when the 1st MARDIV focused solely on combat operations they did not prepare ARVN units at the battalion level and higher for such a transition early enough in the war (i.e., beginning in 1969). By using these hypotheses, the root cause of failed ARVN operations such as Operation Lam Son 719 will be seen.

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[4] US Department of the Navy, MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2011), Glossary-10.

[5] Ibid., 7-1.

There are two limitations germane to this study. First, the analysis was limited to unclassified documents. Second, the analysis was limited to written documents only. Interviews were deliberately not conducted due to time constraints.

The scope of this study is delimited by three factors: time, location, and organization. As a result, the focus will be on the Vietnam War from 1969 through early 1971. Within the I CTZ/MR 1, this study will analyze the 1st MARDIV's ability to effectively perform the operations process: plan, prepare, execute, and assess.[6]

This study makes two assumptions. First, operational art will continue to influence US military thinking into the near future, which directly influenced the decision to use it as the theoretical framework. Second, the US military will continue to fight limited wars that require, at some point, a deliberate transition of security from US forces to a HN security force. Some recent examples are Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

There are seven sections in this study. Following this introduction (i.e., section one), section two is a literary review. Section three is a description of the case study methodology used to organize this monograph. Sections four and five consist of two case studies, which address the research questions. Section six reveals the findings/analysis of the study. Section seven is the conclusion.

[6] Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Unified Land Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2011), 4-1.

Literature Review

In the literature review section, there are five sub-sections that incrementally narrow the focus of this study. First, in the 'theoretical' sub-section, a brief discussion on theory will present the various lenses that will aid insightful analysis. Second, in the 'conceptual' sub-section, key terms—including criteria, which will be used to analyze the case studies—will be defined and explained. Third, in the 'empirical' sub-section, the gap in academic literature pertaining to the topic of this study will be addressed. Fourth, in the 'hypotheses' sub-section, two hypotheses will be proposed. Fifth, the 'summary' sub-section will end the literature review.

There are three theories that will be used to analyze the case studies from the 1st MARDIV while deployed to the I CTZ/MR 1, Vietnam (1969- early 1971). The first theorist is Carl von Clausewitz, who famously asserted that "[t]he political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and the means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."[7] In short, the practice of operational art springs from the starting point (of the political aim for the war). In addition, Clausewitz taught posterity that "[t]he political object—the original motive for the war—will thus determine both the military objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires."[8] Hence, there is an inherent logic in that statesmen generate the political aim(s), which in turn helps military practitioners both create military objectives at the various levels of war (strategic, operational, and tactical) and select the appropriate means.

The second theorist is Helmuth von Moltke (the elder), who demonstrated during both the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, not only the value of tempo but also the value of keeping the enemy off balance. Put differently, Moltke purposely designed and refined his operational approach to exhaust the enemy, maintaining pressure through movement and maneuver, and consequently, affording the enemy little to no recovery

[7] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 87.

[8] Ibid., 81.

time between engagements and battles. Regarding the idea of refinement of an operational approach, Moltke stated that

> no plan of operations extends with certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy's main strength. Only the layman sees in the course of a campaign a consistent execution of a preconceived and highly detailed original concept pursued consistently to the end.[9]

This is relevant because it recognizes that campaign plans and operational approaches will likely require modification once execution begins. The uncertainty present in war demands constant assessment to ensure campaign plans and operational approaches are still relevant to the context of the situation. If a campaign plan or an operational approach is no longer relevant then either refinement or reframing will be required.

The third, and final, theorist is Stathis N. Kalyvas. In his book, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, Kalyvas presented five zones of control that indicate where violence, defections, and denunciation will occur during a civil war. These zones mimic, almost exactly, III MAF's four security categories for an area.[10] For Kalyvas, zone one "is an area of total incumbent control" (i.e., the GVN) and zone five "is an area of total insurgent control" (i.e., the Viet Cong or VC).[11] Zone two "is primarily controlled by the incumbents" and zone four "is primarily controlled by the insurgents."[12] Finally, zone three "is controlled equally by both sides (sides)."[13] This insight becomes a useful tool to understand why the 1st MARDIV focused their operations more on some areas (zones four and five) than other areas (zones one and two).

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[9] Daniel J. Hughes, *Moltke on the Art of War: Selected Writings* (New York: Presidio Press, 1993), 45.

[10] Graham A. Cosmas and Lieutenant Colonel Terrence P. Murray, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, ed. Major William R. Melton and Jack Shulimson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986), 9-10.

[11] Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 196.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

The terms ‘operational art’ and ‘counterinsurgency,’ while defined in the introduction section using ADRP 3-0 and MCDP 1-0, each warrant additional attention here. The most important term in this study is, unquestionably, operational art. It is a term that can be traced back to the Soviet military thinker Aleksandr Svechin after the First World War. In Svechin’s book, *Strategy*, he described operational art as:

> On the basis of the goal of an operation, operational art sets forth a whole series of tactical missions and a number of logistical requirements. Operational art also dictates the basic line of conduct of an operation, depending on the material available, the time which may be allotted to the handling of different tactical missions, the forces which may be deployed for battle on a certain front, and finally on the nature of the operation itself.[14]

This explanation of operational art reinforces the ADRP 3-0 definition in that there are a “series of tactical missions,” not just one decisive mission, that will need to be synchronized in time, space, and purpose to achieve “the goal of an operation.”[15] Additionally, the founder of the School of Military Studies (SAMS), Brigadier General (retired) Huba Wass de Czege, adds to this discussion in his article, “Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer: Operational Art is Not a Level of War.” General Wass de Czege noted that operational art “is what goes on in the explorer’s mind, the mediating and balancing interaction between his strategic and tactical reasoning.”[16] In short, it is a mental activity performed by commanders and staffs. While General Wass de Czege’s point reinforces the definition of operational art found in Joint Publication 5-0, (i.e., “the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, means, and risks”) more than it does the definition from ADRP 3-0, the key takeaway is that operational art is a way of

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[14] Aleksandr A. Svechin, *Strategy*, ed. Kent D. Lee. (Minneapolis: East View Publications, 1992), 69.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Huba Wass de Czege, “Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer: Operational Art is Not a Level of War,” *Small Wars Journal*, accessed August 11, 2017, smallwarjournal.com.

thinking.[17] Therefore, it is the presence, or absence, of this type of thinking that will be sought in the analysis of the 1st MARDIV.

To elaborate on the definition of 'counterinsurgency' found in MCDP 1-0, Roger Trinquier and David Kilcullen are of value. In his book, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency*, Trinquier postulated two ideas germane to this discussion. The first concerned 'the people' when he wrote that "[w]e know that the *sine qua non* of victory in *modern warfare* is the unconditional support of a population."[18] The second pertained to 'the enemy' when he pointed out that "[i]n *modern warfare*, we are not actually grappling with an army organized along traditional lines, but with a few elements acting clandestinely within a population manipulated by a special organization."[19] In the I CTZ/MR 1, both the people and the enemy (a blend between regular and irregular forces) would require the 1st MARDIV to balance how they confront these interrelated elements. David Kilcullen, in his book *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, claimed that:

> the counterinsurgent's fundamental task is to secure and control the population, as a means to marginalize and ultimately destroy the insurgency. This involves countering an enemy who is weaker but much harder to find, and creating order and good governance in order to control the environment.[20]

Kilcullen's use of the word 'marginalize' is important because in a counterinsurgency the insurgent must become both insignificant to and separated from the populace. Once marginalized, the insurgent becomes easier to identify and destroy. Together, Trinquier and Kilcullen, offer a view of counterinsurgency that demands military professionals who are well versed in operational

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[17] US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2017), IV-1.

[18] Roger Trinquier, *Modern Warfare: A French View of Counterinsurgency* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 6.

[19] Ibid., 7.

[20] David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 60.

art. In short, the 1st MARDIV would need to execute offense, defense, and stability tasks using a balanced operational approach to be effective in the I CTZ/MR 1.

With the terms 'operational art' and 'counterinsurgency' not only defined but also explained, it becomes important to add the criteria that will be used to measure these terms. There are three criteria, which come from the elements of operational art in ADRP 3-0: (1) end state, (2) lines of operation (LOO) and lines of effort (LOE), and (3) tempo. The doctrinal term 'end state' is, simply put, "a set of desired future conditions the commander wants to exist when an operation ends."[21] Without an end state, operational art becomes pointless; hence, identifying and analyzing it will be critical to measuring whether or not the 1st MARDIV used operational art from 1969 through early 1971. Next, a LOO "is a line that defines the directional orientation of a force in time and space in relation to the enemy and links the force with its base of operations and objectives."[22] In addition, a LOE "is a line that links multiple tasks using the logic of purpose rather than geographical reference to focus efforts toward establishing a desired end state."[23] Both the LOO and LOE are practical tools that commanders and staffs use to represent the relationship between objectives (which enable commanders to 'direct' tactical actions) to the end state. Finally, tempo "is the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy."[24] Faster tempo usually translates to gaining the initiative, and if maintained, tempo becomes a good indicator of mission success.

Academic literature about the Vietnam War continues to abound; however, there is a gap regarding the efforts of the 1st MARDIV. Of the empirical literature available, there is only one work that comes close to addressing operational art and the 1st MARDIV in the I CTZ between

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[21] US Department of the Army, ADRP 3-0, *Operations*, 2-4.

[22] Ibid., 2-5.

[23] Ibid., 2-6.

[24] Ibid., 2-7.

1969 and early 1971. In 2013, as a student at SAMS, Major Jerem G. Swenddal wrote a monograph titled "General Lewis Walt: Operational Art in Vietnam, 1965-1967".[25] The key differences between Major Swenddal's monograph and this monograph relate to echelon and time. Major Swenddal focused on General Walt, the commanding officer of III MAF, which is one echelon above the focus of this study. Also, Major Swenddal focused on a time period between 1965 through 1967 (the height of USMC involvement in Vietnam) while this study focuses on the time period between 1969 through early 1971 prior to the start of Operation Lam Son 719. While Major Swenddal's monograph and this one may complement each other, there is nevertheless a gap in research.

Given the gap in empirical research on the 1st MARDIV and its use of operational art in Vietnam from 1969 through early 1971, this study asserts two hypotheses. First, when the 1st MARDIV used operational art to nest the strategic military objective with tactical actions, then they were able to create time and space to achieve the strategic objective. Second, when the 1st MARDIV focused solely on combat operations, then they did not prepare ARVN units at the battalion level and higher for such a transition early enough in the war. These hypotheses will begin to fill the research gap for this topic.

The theories of Clausewitz, Moltke (the elder), and Kalyvas will be used to analyze the case studies from the 1st MARDIV. The three criteria—end state, LOO and LOE, and tempo—will measure whether or not the 1st MARDIV employed operational art during the Vietnam War (i.e., pre-dominantly a 'counterinsurgency' war). There is a gap in the empirical literature on operational art and the 1st MARDIV in the I CTZ/MR 1 (1969- early1971), which this study seeks to fill. Thus, in the absence of hypotheses from other authors, this monograph proposes two.

[25] Jerem G. Swenddal, "General Lewis Walt: Operational Art in Vietnam, 1965-1967," School of Advanced Military Studies, 2013.

Methodology

The case study methodology will be used in this monograph. In particular, two case studies will be analyzed and, as a result, a structured, focused comparison will be performed.[26] It is important to point out that there is an advantage and a disadvantage to using two case studies. The advantage of using two case studies is that 1st MARDIV's use of operational art can be viewed over more than a two-year period before transitioning to redeployment. In other words, the analysis will leverage the breadth that the two case studies will provide. Conversely, if breadth is increased, then naturally depth is decreased. Put differently, the disadvantage of using two case studies will be limited depth relative to an analysis of one case study. Given that operational art concerns tactical actions over 'time' in a given area, related to a higher purpose, then breadth vice depth is the logical choice for this study.

The cases will be divided based on two timeframes: Case One (1969) and Case Two (1970-early 1971). These timeframes are important because I Corps and III MAF developed a predilection for revising campaign plans on an annual basis.

Case One (1969) will cover four of the 1st MARDIV's large-scale, named operations: Operation Oklahoma Hills, Muskogee Meadow, Pipestone Canyon, and Durham Peak. During Operation Oklahoma Hills, in an effort to protect the Da Nang Vital Area, the 1st MARDIV used 7th Marines to destroy enemy forces in vicinity of the Happy Valley and Charlie Ridge areas.[27] In Operation Muskogee Meadow, executed by 5th Marines, they aimed to clear enemy forces from the An Hoa basin to prevent enemy forces from acquiring the rice harvest.[28] For Operation Pipeston Canyon (a sequel to Operation Taylor Commons), 1st MARDIV wanted to open Route 4

[26] Alexander L. George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005), 67.

[27] Charles R. Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown 1969* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1988), 105.

[28] Ibid., 117.

(from Dai Loc to Dien Ban) and seize Go Noi island to prevent enemy forces from using Go Noi island as a safe haven.[29] For Operation Durham Peak, conducted by 5th Marines, the emphasis was on Base Area (BA) 116 to clear suspected enemy forces from using it as a base camp.[30] In all of these examples there is a heavy focus on the enemy; however, the 1st MARDIV was simultaneously performing civic action projects to immediately and directly help the local populace. These activities will also be analyzed in Case One.

Case Two (1970- early 1971) will cover four of the 1st MARDIV's large-scale, named operations: Operation Pickens Forest, Barren Green, Dubois Square, and Imperial Lake. In Operation Pickens Forest, the 1st MARDIV was focused on seizing BA 112 and BA 127 using 7th Marines, which were both mountain refuges.[31] For Operation Barren Green, also conducted by 5th Marines, they sought to secure the My Hiep area in northern Arizona to prevent enemy from acquiring the corn harvest.[32] During Operation Dubois Square, one infantry battalion from 1st Marines conducted a reconnaissance in force to confirm or deny enemy presence in a mountainous region northwest of Da Nang.[33] During Operation Imperial Lake, executed by 7th Marines, they desired to achieve what another operation, called Operation Ripley Center, could not: capture the Front Four Headquarters (assessed to be north of Hill 845 in Que Son).[34]

To perform a structured, focused comparison, this study will use the following four structured questions. The first question, relevant to both case studies, is what were the US political aims? With the Nixon administration in office during both case studies, the answer to this question should be not only straightforward but it should also remain constant—i.e., the

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[29] Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown 1969*, 174-175.

[30] Ibid., 193-194.

[31] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, 70-71.

[32] Ibid., 83.

[33] Ibid., 80.

[34] Ibid., 91.

political aim will likely be a stable, democratic South Vietnam that is friendly to the US government and impedes the spread of communism into Asia. The second question is what were the US strategic military objectives? This question, similar to the previous, will also likely have a straightforward answer—i.e., compel both the NVA and VC fighters to surrender, and induce the South Vietnamese populace to support the GVN. This question will also be used in both case studies.

The third question is what operational approach did the 1st MARDIV use to achieve the US strategic military objectives? Again, this question is germane to both case studies; hence, it will be used in both of them. The 1st MARDIV's operational approach for both time periods may change based on the MACV and III MAF campaign plans. In addition, if the operational approach is not explicitly stated in the 1st MARDIV's primary source documents then it will need to be inferred. Regardless of how the 1st MARDIV's operational approach is discerned in each case study, the answer to the question will likely consist of a balance between combined-arms, offensive operations against the NVA and VC forces, and the simultaneous performance of stability tasks to engender the support of the local populace. The fourth question, unlike the three aforementioned questions, will only be applied to the second case study (1970 - early 1971). This question is how did the 1st MARDIV approach the transition with ARVN units? The answer will likely demonstrate a gap in the 1st MARDIV's operational approach(es). Specifically, the heavy emphasis on counterinsurgency operations—or the lack of emphasis on transition to ARVN units—likely led to the failure of the ARVN (i.e., only those forces assigned to the I CTZ/MR 1) at Lam Son 719 and beyond once the 1st MARDIV redeployed to home station in the continental US (CONUS).

The data sources related to the four structured, focused questions come from a variety of sources. The MACV *Command History* series for both 1969 and 1970 will be used to identify the US strategic objective in Vietnam. These primary source documents are available at the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas (KS). The *Operations of*

U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam series from March 1969 through February 1971 provides a month-by-month breakdown of 1st MARDIV operations in the I CTZ/MR 1. These operations summaries will serve as the vital link to uncover the 1st MARDIV's operational approach in the Quang Nam Province for both cases. Each summary is available at the Texas Tech website under the Virtual Vietnam Archive—a wealth of information on the Vietnam War. The III MAF Command Chronologies, also available on the Texas Tech website, will be used to supplement the *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam* series. There are also several articles that will supplement these primary source documents: "When Are Political Objectives Clearly Defined" by Michael A. Morris from Military Review (October 1969); "Understanding the War in Southeast Asia by Lieutenant Colonel Vincent R. Tocci, US Air Force originally from the Armed Forces Journal (May 1970) but later reprinted in the Marine Corps Gazette; "The Guerilla and His World" by Howard R. Simpson from U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings (August 1969); "The Bridge: A Study in Defense" by Captain Wayne A Babb from the Marine Corps Gazette; and "Planning and Exploitation" by Major Gary E. Todd from the Marine Corps Gazette. Each article can be found in the CARL on Fort Leavenworth, KS.

In this monograph, a structured, focused comparison will be implemented to analyze two cases. The first case is focused on named operations during 1969 and the second case on named operations from 1970 through early 1971. There are four structured, focused research questions to facilitate the analysis of both cases: questions one through three apply to both cases, and the fourth only applies to the second case. The data sources that address these questions consist primarily of the MACV *Command History* series from 1969 through 1970 and the *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam* series from 1969 through February 1971.

Case Studies

> Designing and executing a comprehensive campaign to secure the populace and then gain their support requires carefully coordinating actions over time to produce success. One of these actions is developing host nation security forces that can assume primary responsibility for combating the insurgency.
>
> —US Department of the Navy, MCDP 1-0

The Case Study section is divided into three sub-sections. In the first sub-section, an overview of the two cases—Case One (1st MARDIV in 1969) and Case Two (1st MARDIV from 1970 through early 1971)—will place each case study in context. The second sub-section addresses the four questions previously listed in the Methodology section and will be applied to their respective case study. The answer to each question will contain both the evidence and a concise explanation of its significance using end state, LOO and LOE, and tempo. The summary, the third and final sub-section, will re-state the critical insights from the aforementioned sub-sections.

In January 1969, Richard M. Nixon became President of the United States; General Creighton W. Abrams was the Commander of MACV; General Robert E. Cushman, Jr., was the Commander of III MAF; General Ormond R. Simpson was the Commander of the 1st MARDIV; and Colonel Edward F. Danowitz was in charge of the Combined Action Program (CAP) within the I CTZ.[35] As of 1 January 1969, there were 536,040 US service members in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) serving under General Abrams; by 31 December 1969, that number dropped to 474,819 (a reduction of 61,221 personnel in just one year).[36] In addition, at the beginning of 1969, the RVN Armed Forces (RVNAF) had an assigned force strength of 818,209.[37] These figures are important because they highlight what President Nixon was attempting to do in the

[35] Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown 1969*, 2-3.

[36] Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1969, Volume 1* (HQ USMACV, 1970), IV-8.

[37] Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1969, Volume 2* (HQ USMACV, 1970), VI-2.

Vietnam War in 1969. In short, '[b]y 1969, Nixon…recognized that the war must be ended. It had become…a divisive force that had torn the country apart and hindered any constructive approach to domestic and foreign policy problems.'[38] To end the war (at least from a US perspective), Nixon had to begin to bring US service members home, while simultaneously increasing personnel strength within the RVNAF. In short, this concept was expressed to the world as 'Vietnamization' of the war.

Within the I CTZ, the 1st MARDIV continued to operate in the Quang Nam Province (one of five provinces in the I CTZ) with "24,000 strong".[39] From an enemy standpoint, as historian Charles R. Smith pointed out, the

> severe losses during the Tet and post-Tet Offensives of 1968, forced the enemy to reevaluate his military position as the new year began. As a result, Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army strategy and tactics shifted from an attempt to win an immediate victory to an attempt to win by prolonging the conflict. Large unit assaults were to be undertaken only if favorable opportunities presented themselves; small unit operations, particularly highly organized hit-and-run or sapper attacks, attacks by fire, harassment, terrorism, and sabotage would be used more extensively.[40]

Conversely, General Abrams

> advanced the "one war" concept which in essence recognized no such thing as a separate war of big units or of population and territorial security. Under this integrated strategic concept, allied forces were to carry the battle to the enemy simultaneously, in all areas of conflict, by strengthening cooperation between U.S. advisors and commanders and their South Vietnamese military and civilian counterparts.[41]

It is within this context that III MAF developed its "Combined Campaign Plan for 1969" and that the 1st MARDIV would conduct Operations Oklahoma Hills, Muskogee Meadows, Pipestone

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[38] George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2014), 279.

[39] Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown 1969*, 2.

[40] Ibid., 7.

[41] Ibid., 10.

Canyon, and Durham Hills.[42] Simply put, in 1969, "[d]efense of the Republic's second-largest city and surrounding allied military installations from attack, either by rocket artillery or infantry, was the division's main task."[43]

For Case One (1st MARDIV in 1969), the first structured, focused question is what were the US political objectives? Historian Gregory A. Daddis stated that '[i]n March 1964,…the Johnson administration published NSAM [National Security Action Memorandum] 288 which established the political aim in South Vietnam as a "stable and independent noncommunist government."[44] This political objective endured even after Nixon became President in 1969. In fact, as historian George C. Herring noted, '[a]lthough disguising it in the rhetoric of "peace with honor," the Nixon administration persisted in the quixotic search for an independent, non-Communist Vietnam.'[45] It was this political aim that provided military planners from the MACV with the critical information required to develop strategic military objectives. The issue of whether or not military power could have attained this political aim is not pertinent at the moment and will therefore be set aside.[46]

From the strategic military objectives, subordinate commands such as III MAF and 1st MARDIV were then able to develop end states. An end state enables planners to continue to work through the design methodology—as described in current US Army Doctrine—to develop an operational approach with LOOs and/or LOEs.[47] The 1st MARDIV's operational approach in 1969 will be addressed in detail in the third structured, focused question. When transitioning from

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[42] Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown 1969*, 12.

[43] Ibid., 103.

[44] Gregory A. Daddis, *Westmorland's War: Reassessing American Strategy in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 65.

[45] Herring, *America's Longest War*, 277.

[46] Daddis, *Westmorland's War*, 14.

[47] US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2012), 2-4 - 2-11.

planning/preparation to execution, the 1st MARDIV will then be able to use its operational approach—with its objectives depicted along its LOOs and/or LOEs—to direct tactical actions and thereby generate tempo in relation to the enemy. Indeed, it is the arrangement of tactical actions that will allow the 1st MARDIV to control the tempo. Similar to the 1st MARDIV's operational approach, tempo in 1969 will be covered in detail in the third structured, focused question.

The second structured, focused question is what were the US strategic military objectives? There are two documents that describe the US strategic military objectives for 1969: "the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan and the Combined Campaign Plan (CCP) 1969."[48] There were eight objectives in the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan. Smith noted that the Pacification and Development Plan sought

> to provide at least a measure of security for 90 percent of the South Vietnamese population by the end of 1969, and extend national sovereignty throughout the country by eliminating the Viet Cong Infrastructure [VCI], strengthening local government, increasing participation in self-defense forces, encouraging defection among enemy units and their supporters, assisting refugees, combating terrorism, and promoting rural economic development and rice production.[49]

In the CCP, there were only two strategic military objectives listed: (1) "[t]o defeat VC/NVA forces" and (2) "[t]o extend GVN control in RVN."[50] The Joint General Staff (JGS) and MACV clarified that if subordinate units are to achieve the first objective, they must "conduct sustained, coordinated, and combined [arms] offensive operations against enemy forces, base areas, and [the] logistics system."[51] Moreover, to achieve the second objective, subordinate units must:

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[48] Historical Branch, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1969, Volume 1,* II-4.

[49] Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown 1969,* 10.

[50] Historical Branch, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1969, Volume 1,* II-5.

[51] Ibid.

> secure towns, cities, political, economic and population centers, military bases and installations, and LOC; clear and secure areas undergoing pacification; identify and eliminate VCI; develop self-defense forces; participate in population and resource control; and conduct civic action.[52]

The logical connection between the political aim and the strategic military objectives is now clear. At this point, planning at subordinate echelons—corps and division levels—can be accelerated because subordinate commanders can develop end states that are unique to a CTZ or division Tactical Area of Responsibility (TAOR). As stated previously, an understanding of the desired end state, along with the current situation and the problem(s) to be solved, allows planners to then create LOOs and/or LOEs within an operational approach. Since the first objective in the CCP demands that friendly forces conduct "sustained, coordinated, and combined [arms] offensive operations against enemy forces," the expectation for III MAF and the 1st MARDIV is that tempo will need to be higher than both the NVA and VC forces.[53] Essentially, do not afford the enemy sufficient time to rest, refit, and re-attack in the Quang Nam Province, which Moltke (the elder) emphasized.

The third—and final—structured, focused question in the first case study is what operational approach did the 1st MARDIV use to achieve the US strategic military objectives? The evidence suggests that the 1st MARDIV developed an operational approach using two LOOs and one LOE. The likely title for LOO 1 was 'Offensive Operations', LOO 2 was likely titled 'Population Security', and the LOE was likely titled 'Grow/Train ARVN'. In effect, LOO 1 was directly tied to the CCP 1969 objectives, and LOO 2 and the LOE were directly tied to objectives listed in the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan—i.e., "provide…security for 90 percent of the South Vietnamese population" and "increasing participation in self-defense forces."[54] The

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[52] Historical Branch, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1969, Volume 1*, II-5.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Smith, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown 1969*, 10.

first operation, code-named Operation Oklahoma Hills (31 March-29 May), was enemy focused. In the 7th Marines' operation order (Operation Order 1-69), issued on 25 March 1969, the mission statement was focused and clear:

> Commencing H-Hour on D-Day 7th Mar (-)(Rein) in cooperation and coordination with 51st ARVN Regt conducts multi-battalion operation in the WORTH RIDGE-CHARLIE RIDGE-HAPPY VALLEY area to destroy enemy forces, caches, installations and fortifications.[55]

In accordance with both strategic military objectives in the CCP 1969, the 1st MARDIV ordered 7th Marines to conduct an offensive operation "to destroy these enemy elements and his caches, installations, and fortifications, utilizing…[four] fire support bases…, along with helicopter support for troop-lift and resupply requirements."[56] While an end state was not listed in the available primary source documents, one can be inferred by the results of the operation: "the enemy's capability to launch attacks-by-fire and ground assaults on the Danang complex through the southwestern approaches to the city was disrupted substantially during April" 1969.[57] This success in the Charlie Ridge/Happy Valley region denied the NVA a position of advantage to attack Danang and thereby reduced the NVA's ability to generate tempo from this area in the near future.

The second operation, code-named Operation Muskogee Meadows, was a response to intelligence generated from "captured documents exhorting enemy units to step-up the campaign to restock diminishing rice stocks."[58] As a result, from 7-20 April 1969, the 1st MARDIV tasked 5th Marines to execute "a combined search and clear[,] and rice denial operation in the fertile An

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[55] 7th Marines, "Operation Order 1-69: Operation Oklahoma Hills" (Gray Research Library Collection, 1969), 2.

[56] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, April 1969* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1971), 2.

[57] Ibid., 10.

[58] Ibid.

Hoa basin."[59] The 1st MARDIV planners deliberately chose this timeframe because it aligned with Duc Duc and Duy Xuyen districts schedule to harvest rice.[60] This is an excellent example of effective operational art as planners developed a time, space, and purpose logic to link a tactical action to strategic military objectives (i.e., General Wass de Czege's balancing of strategic and tactical thought). Similar to Operation Oklahoma Hills, an end state can be inferred by the result of this operation: "Muskogee Meadows terminated on 20 April, with the successful conclusion of harvest operations adding in excess of 171 tons of rice to GVN storage bins" and, equally important, it was 171 tons denied to the NVA.[61] While Operation Muskogee Meadows was an emergent operation, it was logically nested within LOO 1—Offensive Operations, and LOO 2—Population Security.[62] Moreover, an effective rice denial operation suggests that the effort put a strain on the NVA's logistics system and made it more difficult for the NVA to generate tempo in vicinity of Danang.

In Operation Pipestone Canyon (26 May-7 November 1969), the third operation, 1st MARDIV focused on the "Dodge City/Go Noi Island complex."[63] This area was a known safe haven for the "36th NVA Regiment [with] a troop count approximating 2,500 NVA and VC."[64]

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[59] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, April 1969* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1971), 10.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid., 11.

[62] 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, "Combat After Action Report: Operation Muskogee Meadow" (Gray Research Library Collection, 1969), 6. The mission statement also reveals this linkage to LOOs 1 and 2: "1st Battalion, 5th Marines conducted in assigned AO aggressive offensive operations to seek and destroy enemy forces, weapons, material and positions secured and protected US and RVN installations, units and convoys."

[63] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, December 1969 and 1969 Summary* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1971), 11.

[64] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, June 1969* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1971), 3.

After a number of unsuccessful operations to clear and hold this area, the 1st MARDIV tasked 1st Marines

> not only to destroy enemy forces, but also to purge completely the Dodge City/Go Noi area of his presence, including destruction of his fortifications, base areas, and supply caches. Two significant engineer tasks were planned to coincide with the ground maneuvers…upgrade and open Route 4…[and] clear and level Go Noi Island.[65]

The end state is self-evident from the quote above. The operation, once again, was perfectly nested with the LOO 1—Offensive Operations. Furthermore, Operation Pipestone Canyon "dealt a resounding blow to the enemy's lowland support capability…forcing his units to seek refuge southward in the Que Son mountains."[66] Put differently, the enemy's ability to create tempo was stymied yet again.

The last operation, code-named Operation Durham Peak (July-August 1969), pursued the enemy into the Que Son mountains. The 5th Marines (along with the 39th ARVN Ranger Battalion) and 7th Marines (along with the 196th Light Infantry Brigade) both conducted "search operations in the mountains and adjacent Antenna Valley."[67] In each case, the results were the same—"[t]he enemy was

not encountered in strength; however, the impressive list of captured material,…indicates the westward exfiltration of hostile forces to seek refuge and rehabilitation outside the 1st Marine Division operating area."[68] Presumably, the end state for this operation was "loss of the Que Son mountains" for the enemy, which was successful.[69] The pursuit—one of four offensive tasks listed in FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense, Volume 1*—suggests that the 1st MARDIV had

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[65] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, June 1969*, 3.

[66] Historical Branch, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, December 1969 and 1969 Summary*, 12.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 12-13.

[69] Ibid., 13.

generated a tempo the enemy could no longer handle.[70] This offensive operation is really one in a series of offensive operations within the 1st MARDIV AO. Operation Durham Peak is logically tied to LOO 1—Offensive Operations in the 1st MARDIV operational approach, which, like the other three named operations, was connected to the strategic military objectives stated in the CCP 1969.

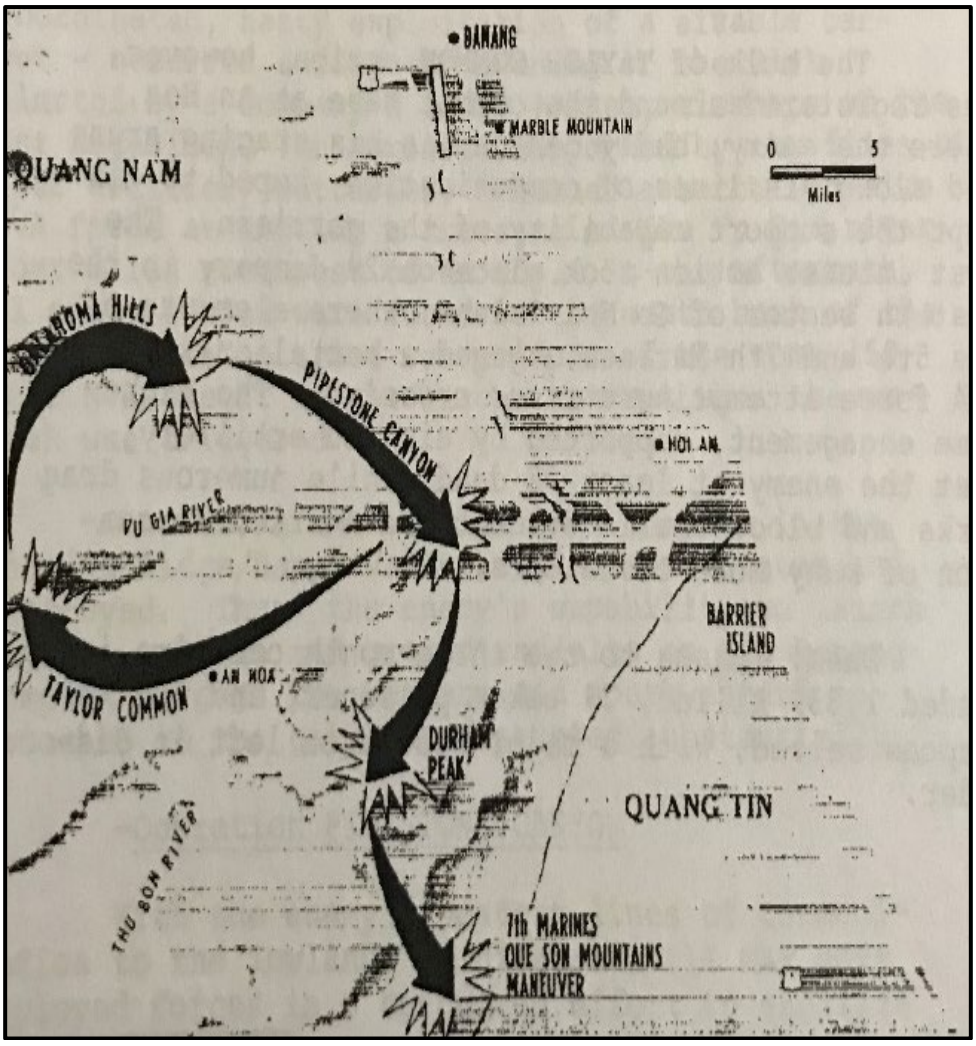

Figure 2. 1st Marine Division Operations in Quang Nam in 1969. Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, December 1969 and 1969 Summary* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1971), 8.

[70] US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-90-1, Offense and Defense Volume 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 2013), 1-2.

Before moving into 1970 and transitioning to the second case, General Edwin B. Wheeler would take command of the 1st MARDIV from General Simpson on 15 December 1969.[71] In his assessment of the situation within the 1st MARDIV TAOR, 'General Simpson declared in December 1969 that in Quang Nam "The enemy…is in very bad shape at the moment. Hunger is an over-riding thing with him; he is trying to find rice almost to exclusion of anything else. He is moving to avoid contact rather than seek it."'[72] Moreover, as it pertains to the Pacification Campaign, "[b]y the end of the year, according to the statistical hamlet evaluation system then being used, about 90 percent of the civilians in I Corps lived in secure localities."[73]

In 1970, the MACV Commander remained the same and General Herman Nickerson, Jr., now "commanded III MAF, which included about 55,000 Marines"—a reduction of roughly 24,000 Marines from the previous year.[74] On 9 March 1970, General Nickerson transferred command of III MAF to General Keith B. McCutcheon and, simultaneously, transferred command of the I CTZ to Commander of XXIV Corps, General Melvin Zais.[75] In the 1st MARDIV, which was reinforced, the personnel strength actually increased from 24,000 in 1969 to 28,000 in 1970.[76] After an injury received during a helicopter crash on 18 April 1970, General Wheeler had to transfer command of 1st MARDIV to General Charles F. Widdecke—who remained in command until 1st MARDIV redeployed in the spring of 1971.[77]

General Abrams' one war concept remained largely the same in 1970. This approach enabled the MACV staff and the South Vietnamese JGS to produce three different plans to direct

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[71] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, 6.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 5.

[74] Ibid., 2.

[75] Ibid., 20.

[76] Ibid., 2.

[77] Ibid., 23.

operations in 1970: the "allies' Combined Campaign Plan for 1970", the "Consolidated RVNAF Improvement and Modernization Plan (CRIMP)", and the "second annual Pacification and Development Plan."[78] From these documents, III MAF developed their "Combined Campaign Plan for 1970" which emphasized security of both territory and the population as the primary objective.[79] Within the III MAF plan, the enemy was divided 'into two categories: the VC/NVA main forces, "often located in remote areas, or entering RVN from safe havens across the border," and the VC guerilla units, terrorist groups, and underground, "located closer to and often intermingled with the people."'[80]

Given these enemy categories, III MAF planners then created four security categories—Secure Areas (category one), Consolidation Zones (category two), Clearing Zones (category three), and Border Surveillance Zones (category four)—and applied them to each locality within the I CTZ.[81] This zoning construct facilitated a simple way to direct the efforts of the many different types of security forces in the I CTZ. For example, within areas designated as Clearing Zones (category three) and Border Surveillance Zones (category four), the "American, Korean, and ARVN regulars were to engage and destroy the [VC/NVA] main forces, neutralize their bases, and keep them away from populated areas."[82] Meanwhile, within areas designated as Secure Areas (category one) and Consolidation Zones (category two), the "Regional and Popular Forces, People's Self-Defense Force, and national police would concentrate on the guerillas."[83] In general, within the I CTZ, categories one and two existed to the east along the coastline of the South China Sea, while categories three and four existed to the west in the mountainous region

[78] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, 8.

[79] Ibid., 8-9.

[80] Ibid., 9.

[81] Ibid., 9-10.

[82] Ibid., 9.

[83] Ibid.

along the borders with Laos and North Vietnam.[84] It was within this context that the 1st MARDIV would conduct Operations Pickens Forest, Barren Green, Dubois Square, and Imperial Lake.

For Case Two (1st MARDIV in 1970 – early 1971), the first structured, focused question is what were the US political aims? The stated political aim 'in Vietnam continued to be "A free, independent and viable nation of South Vietnam functioning in a secure environment both internally and regionally."'.[85] While the wording is different from NSAM 288, the message is the same. Given that the political aim remained constant, this led to predictability for the MACV staff and other subordinates staffs to develop, or in this case, retain military end states. Based on the end state and assessments from operations in 1969, the 1st MARDIV staff was able to create, modify, or keep a LOO and/or a LOE for their operational approach in 1970. As seen in Case One, the operational approach developed for 1970 will dictate how tempo is generated in execution.

The second structured, focused question is what were the US strategic military objectives? The "allies' Combined Campaign Plan for 1970", the "CRIMP," and the "second annual Pacification and Development Plan" contained the US strategic military objectives for 1970.[86] The 1970 CCP listed two strategic military objectives:

> One of the major objectives of the campaign plan was participation in the GVN 1970 P&D [Pacification and Development] Plan. That in itself was significant. Whereas the 1969 Combined Campaign Plan called for support of pacification and development, the 1970 plan called for participation. That objective was equally as important as the other objective, defeat of the Viet Cong/North Vietnamese Army (VC/NVA) forces.[87]

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[84] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971,* 10-11.

[85] Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1970, Volume 1* (HQ USMACV, 1971), II-1.

[86] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, 8.

[87] Historical Branch, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1970, Volume 1*, II-4.

In addition to those two objectives, the CRIMP

> emphasized improvement in the quality rather than increases in the size of the Vietnamese Army, Navy, and Air Force. The plan called for continued effort to create a military system able to defend the country after the Americans left and included provisions for further modernization of equipment, improvement of living conditions for military men and their families, and simplification of the chain of command.[88]

The Pacification and Development Plan contained eight objectives: "territorial security", "protection of the people against terrorism", "people's self defense", "local administration", "greater national unity," "brighter life for war victims", "people's information", and "prosperity for all".[89] When the three aforementioned plans are compared, there is one overarching commonality: each plan seeks to protect the South Vietnamese people from North Vietnamese aggression. These strategic military objectives, as stated in Case One (1st MARDIV in 1969), provide planners the direction needed to align end state(s), LOOs and LOEs, and tempo within an operational approach.

The third structured, focused question is what operational approach did the 1st MARDIV use to achieve the US strategic military objectives? The evidence suggests that the 1st MARDIV maintained the operational approach used in Case One (1st MARDIV in 1969): LOO 1—Offensive Operations, LOO 2—Population Security, and the LOE—Grow/Train ARVN. More specifically, LOO 1—Offensive Operations was directly tied to the 1970 CCP; LOO 2—Population Security was linked to both the 1970 CCP and the Pacification and Development Plan; and the LOE—Grow/Train ARVN was nested under the CRIMP.

During the first operation in 1970, code-named Operation Pickens Forest (mid July-24 August 1970), the 7th Marines' regimental commander focused on attacking the enemy in BA 112. Base Area 112 was "bounded on the north by the Vu Gia River [and] [i]t stretched eastward

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[88] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, 8.

[89] Historical Branch, MACV Joint Staff, *Command History: U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam 1970, Volume 2* (HQ USMACV, 1971), VIII-4 – 6.

to the…Arizona Territory, southward into Quang Ngai Province, and westward to the Song Cai."[90] In the 7th Marines' operation order (Operation Order 3-70), issued on 10 July 1970, the mission statement was both clear and direct:

> 7th Marines (-)(Rein) conducts Category III and search and destroy operations in Song Thu Bon Valley and adjacent areas to interdict enemy logistical support, destroy enemy facilities, and kill or capture enemy in the area.[91]

While contact with the enemy was nearly non-existent, a large cache of weapons and ammunition was discovered, along with a "hospital complex".[92] Moreover, the Marines used "[a]irborne loudspeaker broadcasts [and] instructed all people to move to the river for evacuation from the combat area; those who fled would be considered NVA or VC", which ensured "the operation proceeded unhindered by the presence of innocent civilians."[93] The Marines also discovered a large corn crop ready to be harvested. To make use of the corn, the 1st MARDIV "instituted a program to pick the corn for friendly civilian use…[and, as a result,] 128,000 pounds of unshelled corn were picked from 24 to 31 July."[94] While the end state for Operation Pickens Forest was not articulated, one can infer that General Widdecke wanted both the NVA/VC and the caches in BA 112 either destroyed or captured and exploited. The operation supported LOO 1—Offensive Operations and LOO 2—Population Security because the Marines used the loudspeaker technique to protect non-combatants during the movement to contact. The assessment was that "most of the enemy appeared to have fled south", which suggests that 1st MARDIV's tempo of operations

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[90] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, 71.

[91] 7th Marines, "Operation Order 3-70: Operation Pickens Forest" (Gray Research Library Collection, 1970), 2.

[92] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, July 1970* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1977), 5.

[93] Ibid., 6-7.

[94] Ibid., 7.

kept the NVA/VC forces in the Quang Nam Province within MR 1 (formerly called I CTZ) off balance.[95]

The second operation in 1970, code-named Operation Barren Green (24-26 July), was a battalion-level operation focused on the northeastern portion of the Arizona area within the 5th Marines' TAOR. By this point in 1970, named operations were transitioning from regimental- to battalion-level operations. Much like Operation Pickens Forest, 2d Battalion, 5th Marines (2/5) conducted a "cordon and search operation…to prevent enemy in the area from harvesting [the] remaining corn."[96] The results for the operation "included 18 NVA/VC killed, five VC suspects apprehended, five weapons captured, and more than five tons of food uncached."[97]

The end state for this three-day operation was left unstated; however, the regimental commander likely emphasized harvesting the rest of the corn before the enemy. A cordon and search operation is one of two techniques that can be used to execute a movement to contact, which is an offensive operation.[98] In short, Operation Barren Green clearly supports LOO 1—Offensive Operations. Also, the speed of this operation and its success in denying the enemy a source of supply seems to reinforce the idea that the 1st MARDIV's tempo continued to overwhelm the enemy.

In the third operation in 1970, code-named Operation Dubois Square (10-19 September 1970), 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines (3/1) conducted a battalion-level operation "to determine the extent of enemy logistic support operations and troop traffic along the Cu De river in western

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[95] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, August 1970* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1977), 7.

[96] Historical Branch, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, July 1970, 11*.

[97] Ibid.

[98] US Department of the Army, FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense, Volume 1*, 2-15. "Cordon and search is a technique of conducting a movement to contact that involves isolating a target area and searching suspected locations within that target area to capture or destroy possible enemy forces and contraband."

Elephant Valley, 15 miles west-north-west of Danang."[99] While contact with enemy forces was limited, "the operation confirmed enemy use of the river and trails…for movement to lowland regions. Data necessary for supporting arms coverage of the region was compiled…to update the division target list."[100] The collection of data about enemy logistics operations in vicinity of the Cu De river sounds like nothing more than an area reconnaissance operation; however, author Edward F. Murphy noted another reason for conducting Operation Dubois Square. After the 1st MARDIV dismantled the incomplete and burdensome "Da Nang Anti-Infiltration System" in mid-August 1970, 1st Marines decided to conduct Operation Dubois Square "[t]o determine if the enemy was massing for an attack on Da Nang."[101] When stated this way, the operation begins to sound more like a reconnaissance in force operation.[102]

Similar to the previous named operations, the end state for Operation Dubois Square is unclear. Given the context of the situation, the end state for this operation was likely quite simple and direct: enemy intentions identified along the Cu De river and rapidly reported to the 1st Marines' command post. It is clear that Operation Dubois Square was not an offensive operation (i.e, a movement to contact, attack, exploitation, or pursuit).[103] Nevertheless, a reconnaissance in force operation not only shares many characteristics with offensive operations (e.g., "attack enemy positions and attempt to force the enemy to react") but it also has the potential to support

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[99] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, September 1970* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1977), 6.

[100] Ibid., 7.

[101] Edward F. Murphy, *Semper Fi Vietnam, from Da Nang to the DMZ: Marine Corps Campaigns, 1965-1975* (Novato: Presidio, 2003), 338.

[102] US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 5-21. "A reconnaissance in force is a limited objective operation normally conducted by a battalion-sized task force or larger force and assigned when the enemy is operating within a specific area and the commander cannot obtain adequate intelligence by other means. Reconnaissance in force is an aggressive reconnaissance which develops information and intelligence in contact with the enemy to determine and exploit enemy weaknesses."

[103] US Department of the Army, FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense Volume 1*, 1-2.

follow-on offensive operations by a larger, more capable combat force.[104] In this regard, Operation Dubois Square is nested with LOO 1—Offensive Operations. Again, similar to Operation Pickens Forest, the 1st MARDIV (using 3/1 in this instance) continued to control the tempo of operations through its willingness to seek contact with the enemy. Indeed, the fact that "[d]uring September, combat in Quang Nam ebbed to the lowest level in more than two years", seems only to suggest further that the 1st MARDIV was overwhelmingly in control of the tempo.[105]

The fourth operation in 1970, code-named Operation Imperial Lake (31 August 1970 – 7 May 1971) was initiated to destroy the elusive enemy headquarters in the Quang Nam Province: Front Four Headquarters. In the original 7th Marines' order (Operation Order 4-70), issued on 30 August 1970, the mission statement clearly depicts the regimental commander's goal: "7th Marines conduct intensified Category III operations in Que Son Mountains to locate and destroy Front Four Forward Headquarters and to capture or kill Front Four personnel."[106] Moreover, in the Concept of Operation paragraph, it states

> At H-hour on D-day one battalion (-) (Rein) conduct helilift into landing zones in the Que Son Mountains after extensive artillery and air preps, conduct detailed sweeps of operation area, using recon and aerial observation teams, to locate and destroy enemy headquarters and personnel.[107]

When 7th Marines needed to begin its redeployment to the United States in mid-September 1970, 5th Marines relieved 7th Marines in their TAOR and continued to execute Operation Imperial Lake.[108] In the end, 1st Marines would become the final regiment to complete Operation Imperial

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[104] US Department of the Army, FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations,* 5-21.

[105] Historical Branch, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, September 1970,* 1.

[106] 7th Marines, "Operation Order 4-70: Operation Imperial Lake" (Gray Research Library Collection, 1970), 1.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Cosmas, *U.S. Marines In Vietnam: Vietnamization and Redeployment 1970-1971*, 94-95.

Lake.[109] The combined effects of 7th, 5th, and 1st Marines' efforts during Operation Imperial Lake "tallied 305 NVA/VC killed, 153 VC suspects detained, and 231 weapons captured since 31 August 1970."[110]

The format of Operation Order 4-70 did not have a commander's intent paragraph to note the end state of Operation Imperial Lake. Nevertheless, the mission statement essentially provides the end state: the Front Four Headquarters destroyed. The Concept of Operation revealed a preparation, followed by a sweep of the area to destroy the enemy. Undoubtedly, this was an extended offensive operation directed at the enemy's command and control (C2) capability in the Quang Nam Province, which supports LOO 1-Offensive Operations. The duration of the operation—nine months—highlights 1st MARDIV's ability to disrupt the capability of the enemy's C2, thereby dictating the tempo.

The fourth—and final—structured, focused question is how did the 1st MARDIV approach the transition with ARVN units? The evidence suggests that other than conducting tactical, named operations with or in support of ARVN forces such as Operation Oklahoma Hills or Operation Hoang Dieu (a "RVNAF inspired lowland saturation operation" within the Quang Nam Province), the 1st MARDIV—particularly as redeployment loomed—began the process of conducting a relief in place/transfer of authority with ARVN units to assume responsibility for 1st MARDIV battlespace.[111] Noteworthy historian and USMC Colonel (retired) Allen R. Millet noted that by 1971, III MAF (eventually transitioning back to a MAB) "spent most of its energy turning over villages and installations to the ARVN. Harassed by sapper and rocket attacks, the

[109] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, December 1970 and 1970 Summary* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1977), 12.

[110] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, May and June 1971* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1977), 2.

[111] Historical Branch, USMC, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, October 1970* (HQ, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, 1977), 1.

Marines reduced their TAORs to the immediate Da Nang area in 1971."[112] This approach of slowly reducing 1st MARDIV operations within their TAOR and eventually turning over all operations to the ARVN was consistent with President Nixon's policy of Vietnamization. Yet, the focus appeared to be 'operations' instead of 'training' ARVN forces to be successful once the 1st MARDIV redeployed to CONUS. The one exception is the Combined Unit Pacification Program (CUPP).

In an effort to build on the success of the CAP, in January 1970, "III MAF and the ARVN I Corps Headquarters conceived the CUPP as a means to extend community security accruing from expanded US/territorial force partnership."[113] The critical difference between CAP and CUPP was the training of the Marines: "CAP Marines [were] specially selected and trained", while "Marine CUPP [were] squads from 1st Division rifle companies"—i.e., not specially trained.[114] The CUPP enabled the 1st MARDIV to train Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) to provide effective security for their respective hamlets. In short, at the CUPP or squad-level, training seemed to be the focus; whereas, at the battalion through division level, operations seemed to be the focus. Therefore, the 1st MARDIV's approach to transition with the ARVN (and the RF/PF) in the Quang Nam Province was mixed at best, and it appeared to be dependant on echelon and in which of III MAF's four security categories a unit was operating.

In Case One (1st MARDIV in 1969), there is a clear linkage among the stated political objective in NSAM 288 (a GVN that is stable and democratic), the strategic military objectives in the 1969 Pacification and Development Plan and the CCP 1969 (with the two critical objectives—defeat NVA/VC and extend GVN control), and the tactical actions (i.e., the four named operations) executed within the 1st MARDIV's operational approach. The end state for

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[112] Allen R. Millet, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the US Marine Corps* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 603-604.

[113] Historical Branch, *Operations of U.S. Marine Forces Vietnam, December 1970 and 1970 Summary*, 33.

[114] Ibid., 33-34.

each operation, even if not available in primary source documents, was easily inferred. The tempo generated through the aforementioned offensive operations kept the enemy off balance and, as a result, largely ineffective. With firm control of the tempo at the end of 1969, the 1st MARDIV shifted its attention to campaigning in the Quang Nam Province in 1970.

In Case Two (1st MARDIV from 1970 through early 1971) there is also a noticeable connection among the political aim, strategic military objectives (as stated in the 1970 CCP, the CRIMP, and the second annual Pacification and Development Plan), and the 1st MARDIV's operational approach. The end state for each named operation was again, easily inferred, and the 1st MARDIV continued to out pace the enemy's ability to conduct effective operations. Simply put, the 1st MARDIV continued to control the tempo throughout 1970 and into early 1971. Next, this study will transition to the Findings and Analysis section in an effort to make sense of the evidence from Cases One and Two.

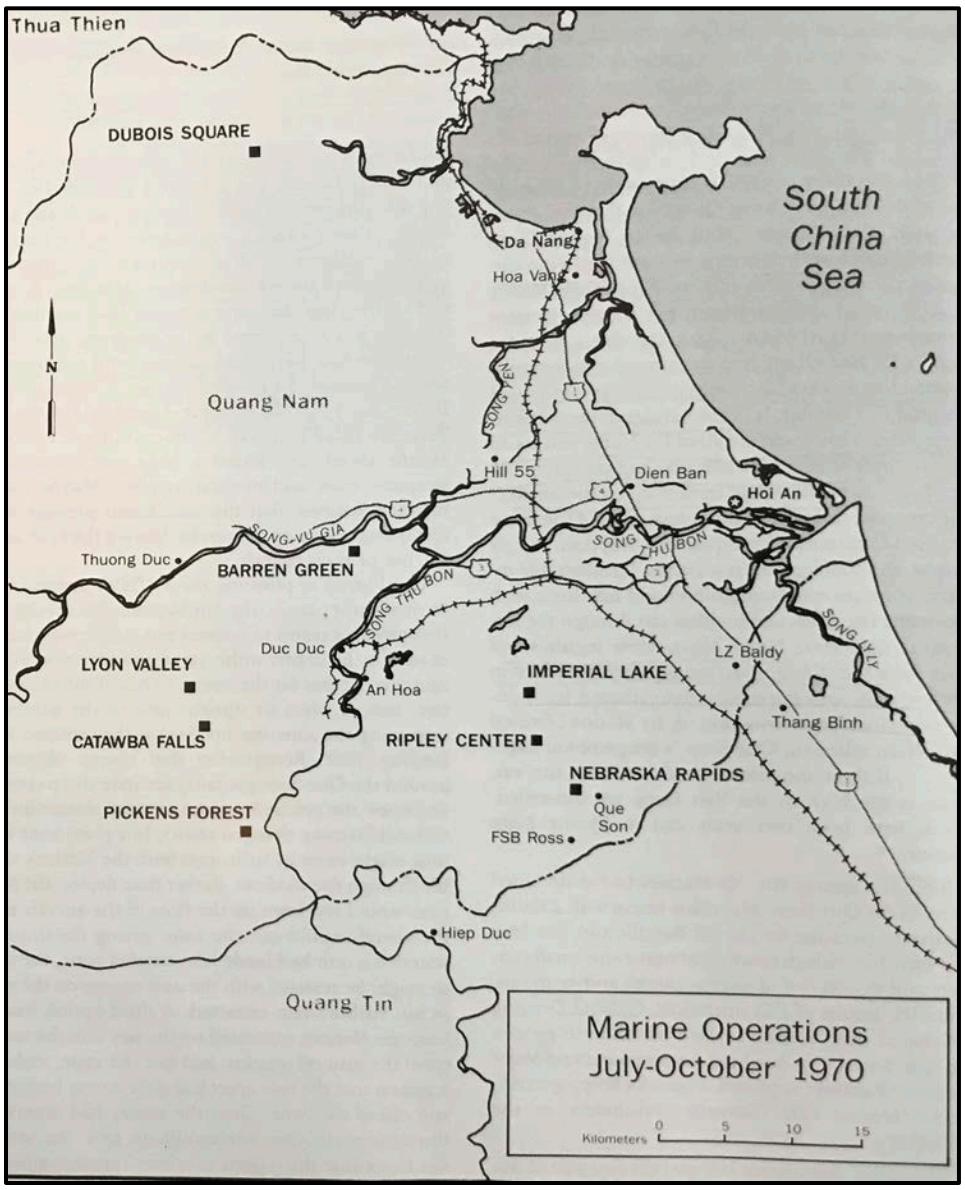

Figure 3. 1st Marine Division Operations in Quang Nam in 1970. Graham A. Cosmas and Lieutenant Colonel Terrence P. Murray, *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: Vietnamizaiton and Redeployment, 1970-1971*, ed. Major William R. Melton and Jack Shulimson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986), 90.

Findings and Analysis

> Put another way, our aim at the operational level is to get strategically meaningful results from tactical efforts.
>
> —US Department of the Navy, MCDP 1-2

The Findings and Analysis section is divided into three sub-sections. In the first section, Findings, the broader meaning will be derived from the evidence found using the structured, focused questions in Cases One and Two. In the second section, Analysis, a judgment will be made to determine whether or not the evidence supports the hypotheses. In other words, each hypothesis will either be supported, not supported, or a mixed outcome. In the third section, Summary, the essential points from the two previous sub-sections will be reiterated.

The first structured, focused question asked what were the US political aims? The empirical evidence demonstrates that the US political aim—a stable, democratic GVN—remained the same under both the Johnson and Nixon administrations. The consistent US fear that communism would spread, in effect, reinforced the stability of this objective. In an effort to broaden this frame, it becomes important to also consider Nixon's Vietnamization policy.[115] Once this variable is added, an observer will see the operational environment (OE) differently than before, and, in terms of operational art, reframing would be a prudent next step. Unfortunately, it seems that nothing of the sort occurred within the 1st MARDIV given that LOO 1-Offensive Operations continued to be the dominant activity for battalion-level units and higher. The critical lesson from this question is that both policy decisions and political objectives are relevant variables to the OE; and a change in one or both will likely require a commander and staff to reframe their OE. As a counterfactual, had the 1st MARDIV reframed, perhaps the LOE—Grow/Train ARVN would have become the priority over LOO 1—Offensive Operations

[115] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011), 336.

in the operational approach.[116] Moreover, through reframing, the 1st MARDIV may have also pursued a different way to train battalion-level units and higher for large-scale operations.

The second structured, focused question asked what were the US strategic military objectives? The empirical evidence shows that the US strategic military objectives could essentially be reduced to two general categories—defeat the enemy and protect/gain support from the population—because, by this point, US strategic leaders had no allusions as to the kind of war they were fighting.[117] As Trinquier and Kilcullen note, this combination of strategic military objectives—enemy and population—is the basic model to apply during counterinsurgency operations. The US strategic leaders, either knowingly or unknowingly, revealed the profound influence Clausewitz had on their thinking as they created strategic military objectives that (1) nested with the abstract political aim and (2) accounted for the kind of war in which they were fighting. Beyond Clausewitz, MACV's predilection to publish strategic military objectives on an annual basis in documents such as the CCP unveils a propensity to reframe—continuously. In other words, MACV did not limit itself to asking about the nature of the war before the conflict began (as Clausewitz asserted), it continued to ask this strategic question throughout the conflict. This indicates a mode of thinking that has value at every level of war, which makes it worthy not only of praise but also adoption.

The third structured, focused question asked what operational approach did the 1st MARDIV use to achieve the US strategic military objectives? The empirical evidence demonstrates that the 1st MARDIV's operational approach could only be gleaned from an analysis of the stated US strategic military objectives and the recorded tactical actions of the 1st MARDIV's subordinate units (mainly large-scale, named operations). In the absence of a written or graphic depiction of an operational approach, the 1st MARDIV commander and staff seem to

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[116] John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 101.

[117] Clausewitz, *On War*, 88.

affirm General Wass de Czege's claim that operational art is a way of thinking (i.e., "the mediating and balancing interaction between…strategic and tactical reasoning").[118] Put differently, thinking like an explorer, as General Wass de Czege's described it, is infinitely more important than a product. Hence, operational artists that can think like an explorer are valuable to a commander because they are capable of creating a logic for action that is sensitive to the context of a given situation.

The fourth structured, focused question (which was only used in Case Two) asked how did the 1st MARDIV approach the transition with ARVN units? The empirical evidence shows that the 1st MARDIV sought efficiencies, specifically regarding large-scale operations, to simultaneously train ARVN units (battalion-level and higher) and maintain a high tempo of combat operations. The on-the-job-training (OJT) approach can be beneficial if a foundation in basic leader, individual, and collective skills were already established. The supported-supporting relationship from current US Joint Doctrine will be useful to delineate how the OJT approach might have helped or hurt ARVN proficiency prior to the 1st MARDIV redeployment. If the ARVN were mostly supported and the Marines supporting during named operations, then the OJT approach might have created units capable of independent operations; however, if the Marines were either always or mostly supported and the ARVN supporting, then the ARVN would likely be hindered by an overreliance on the 1st MARDIV. With the implementation of the CUPP, it seems like the program was designed to ensure the Marines were always in a supporting role to RF/PF units—hence their success. In short, US forces need to be pay attention to this dynamic from the outset and avoid creating dependent (instead of independent) HN security forces.

The first hypothesis asserts that when the 1st MARDIV used operational art to nest strategic military objectives with tactical actions, then they were able to create time and space to achieve the strategic objectives. The evidence suggests that this hypothesis is a mixed outcome. While the 1st MARDIV had maintained the initiative from 1969 through early 1971 using

[118] Wass de Czege, "Thinking and Acting Like an Early Explorer."

predominately offensive operations, they were unable to successfully train the ARVN in the Quang Nam Province to operate independently (especially, once the 1st MARDIV redeployed to CONUS).

The second hypothesis asserts that when the 1st MARDIV focused solely on combat operations, then they did not prepare ARVN units at the battalion level and higher for such a transition early enough in the war (i.e., beginning in 1969). The evidence suggests that this hypothesis is supported. The OJT approach to training was efficient but not effective in preparing ARVN battalions and above to conduct large-scale operations against NVA/VC forces. When the pressure of time and the threat of death are present, is it not difficult to understand why training the ARVN at the battalion-level and higher was not a priority. Thus, a successful operation does not immediately equate to successful training. In the final analysis, training, more often than not, took a back seat to the demands of combat. Lieutenant General Ngo Quang Truong of the RVNAF articulated this idea in the metaphor of training firefighters:

> Entering the war with the posture and disposition of a fire brigade, the Americans rushed about to save the Vietnamese house from destruction but took little interest in caring for the victims. Only after they realized that the victims, too, should be made firefighters to save their own houses, did Americans set about to really care for them. Valuable time was lost, and by the time the victims could get onto their feet and began to move forward a few steps after recovery, the fire-brigade was called back to the home station.[119]

In short, Vietnamization should have been implemented well before 1969.[120]

In the Findings sub-section, critical thinking was a recurring theme. In the first question, it was the ability to reframe based on a known change in the OE. In the second question, it was the patterns of thought and habits of inquiry (e.g., what kind of war are we fighting?) whereby commanders and staff members would actively look for changes in the OE that might demand reframing. In the third question, it was identified that thinking like an explorer was more

[119] Ngo Q. Troung, "RVNAF and US Operational Cooperation and Coordination," Indochina Monographs (Washington: US Army Center of Military History, 1979), 172.

[120] Ibid., 182-183.

important than the product that captures an operational approach. In the fourth question (again, only used in Case Two), the OJT approach to training battalion-level units and above was deemed faulty—an example of wishful thinking—given the time constraints from Nixon's policy of Vietnamizaiton. When the priority remained combat operations, training at echelons at and above the battalion, unfortunately, suffered. In the Analysis sub-section, the first hypothesis was a mixed result and the second hypothesis was supported. The next, and final, section is the Conclusion of this monograph.

Conclusion

> T.E. Lawrence…while leading the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire in 1917 [observed]: "Do not try to do too much with your own hands. Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them." A key word in Lawrence's advice is "tolerably."
>
> —US Department of the Navy, MCDP 1-0

The thesis proposed at the beginning of this monograph was that from 1965 through 1971, III MAF conducted counterinsurgency operations in the I CTZ/MR 1. The 1st MARDIV successfully conducted operational art in the Quang Nam Province to buy time and space to prepare the ARVN for future operations. President Nixon's policy of Vietnamization forced a premature transition between 1st MARDIV units and ARVN units, denying them sufficient time to train, advise, and assist the ARVN to prepare them to conduct independent offensive operations, as demonstrated by the failure of Operation Lam Son 719 in March 1971.

The evidence suggests that this thesis is supported. The 1st MARDIV clearly linked tactical actions—as represented in the named, large-scale operations and the CUPP—with strategic objectives, which were linked to Nixon's political aim. To buy time, the 1st MARDIV conducted offensive operations that maintained a higher tempo than the enemy. To buy space, the 1st MARDIV conducted offensive operations in category III areas. The fundamental issue with Vietnamization was the timing of its implementation. Specifically, when President Nixon announced the policy in 1969, it did not afford units (such as the 1st MARDIV) time to adequately train, advise, and assist the ARVN before redeploying to CONUS. In this sense, the transition between the 1st MARDIV and the ARVN in MR 1 truly was premature. This was unfortunate, because from an operational art standpoint, had the 1st MARDIV considered transitioning security to the ARVN in MR 1 earlier in the war (e.g., in 1965), then perhaps by 1971, the same transition would have been vastly more mature and acceptable. More importantly, as it pertains to operational art, there is a lesson to be gleaned here that is unique to a counterinsurgency war. Focus on the transition with HN security forces from the outset.

A counterinsurgency war, by its nature, has limited aims; therefore, prolonged occupation is undesirable. In short, the quickest way out of Vietnam was a strong, independent ARVN that could defend its country and create a stable environment for the government and the populace. While combat is alluring, especially for the US military, commanders and staffs using operational art should be cautious of this tendency to focus on it exclusively (or elevate offensive operations to the highest priority among many). Think about training the HN force—with the goal of transitioning security to them at some unknown point in the future—and combat actions simultaneously in a counterinsurgency war. Put another way, expect (or make the assumption) that the US President, particularly after an election cycle, will force a mass exodus. To prepare, use operational art to think through the prioritization and balancing of stability tasks with offense/defense tasks. Hence, do not let a policy such as Vietnamization come as a surprise, implement the concept in the operational approach early and reframe as the situation demands.

Future research regarding this topic, as historian John Lewis Gaddis noted, can be tailored to either zooming in or zooming out to extract information from a variety of perspectives.[121] If one were to zoom in, perhaps future research could focus on one or two named operations in the I CTZ/MR 1 at the regimental level to uncover how the myriad of tactical actions either supported or undermined the linkages among strategic objectives and the political aim. In contrast, instead of a large-scale named operation, perhaps research could look at the many tactical actions that were occurring between named operations to determine, once again, whether or not such actions supported or undermined the linkages among strategic objectives and the political aim. Indeed, both of the aforementioned options could be combined. In other words, one could analyze two large-scale named operations and the tactical actions that occurred in between them to understand how operational art was either applied or not applied. Finally, an analysis of the 1st MARDIV commander (similar to Major Swenddal's monograph on General

[121] Gaddis, *The Landscape of History*, 22.

Walt—the III MAF commander from 1965-1967) is another option to understand how operational art was applied (or not applied) at different time periods in the I CTZ/MR 1.

If one were to zoom out, perhaps future research could focus on the elements of III MAF (i.e., the ground, air, and logistics elements). Specifically, a critical investigation into how the elements of III MAF, now called a Marine-Air-Ground Task Force or MAGTF, worked together in time, space, and purpose to achieve (or help achieve) the political aim. Similar to the recommendation for zooming in, this analysis could identify whether or not the tactical actions within III MAF's subordinate elements either supported or undermined the linkages among strategic objectives and the political aim. This analysis could focus on one of three time periods: (1) pre-Vietnamization policy 1965-1969, (2) after the Vietnamization policy was implemented 1969-1971, or (3) both (i.e, pre- and post-Vietnamization policy 1967-1971). This investigation would afford the researcher to holistically understand how III MAF performed operational art in a counterinsurgency war.

In summary, the conclusion from the research conducted in this study is that the thesis is supported. In an effort to benefit from this historical analysis, it is recommended that commanders and staffs in a counterinsurgency war craft an operational approach that places a high priority on training the HN force in an attempt to avoid the shock of a shift in policy (e.g., Vietnamization) that brings US military forces back to CONUS earlier than anticipated. In short, do not fall into the counterinsurgency trap, whereby US forces take the lead and deny the HN force the many opportunities available for them to improve—and eventually take the lead. While it may be easier to do the many offensive, defensive, and stability tasks for the HN forces, it only makes it more difficult for US forces to leave. Future research could zoom in and analyze one or two operations in detail, or zoom out and analyze III MAF holistically using the MAGTF construct as a guide to understand how operational art was applied (or not applied) in the I CTZ/MR 1.

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