



The Mattis Way of War: An Examination of Operational Art in Task Force 58 and 1st Marine Division

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This thesis examines the generalship, leadership, and operational art of General James N. Mattis, US Marine Corps by using Task Force 58 in Afghanistan as a formative base and then comparing elements of operational art to the conduct of the 1st Marine Division in Operation Iraqi Freedom, 2003. Mattis draws upon many historical influences that shape his operational design in both campaigns. He puts great effort and focus on ensuring that his commander's intent is understood by all his subordinates and uses a preference for a small staff in the planning and execution of his intent. He makes heavy use of personally selected liaison officers to form and sustain habitual relationships with higher and adjacent units. Through the use of historical examples and a refusal to be constrained by doctrine and popular thought he uses innovative approaches in his design. These innovative approaches often constitute paradigm shifts with contemporary thought and doctrine. A 'Mattis Way of War' is postulated in the conclusion which draws from his use of history, commander's intent, and leadership to build up a capacity, or potential energy, for action in his unit. Once built up, he unleashes this energy utilizing explicit trust in his staff and subordinates.

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Kelley Thornton:

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