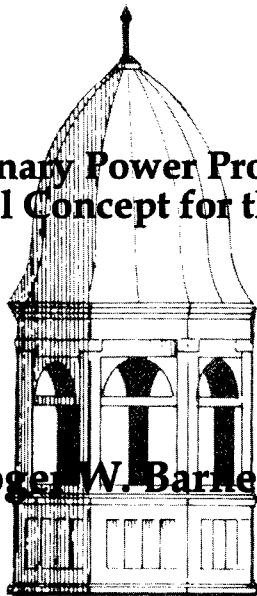


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**Expeditionary Power Projection:  
An Operational Concept for the U.S. Navy**

**Roger W. Barnett**



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Operational concepts seek strategic effect from the use of force. An operational concept is essential for focusing planning, training, and exercises. It is critical in assisting other services and allies to understand how U.S. naval forces help to ensure success. It offers anchors for the development of force structure and organization necessary to implement it, and leads to better definition of challenges and to the prioritization of efforts to overcome them.

This operational concept, expeditionary power projection, explores how naval forces provide special leverage at the operational level of war. Naval forces make major operational contributions to the attainment of security objectives through the application of expeditionary power projection, which consists conceptually of engaging in forward regions, striking and seizing targets ashore, dominating the battlespace, and ensuring sustainment.

Geography will ensure that naval forces will be important as long as the United States desires to remain a key global player. Thus, the capability to project expeditionary power will endure. For today, and for the next several decades, expeditionary power projection will underwrite the nation's security and help to shield U.S. friends and allies from the effects of an unstable and turbulent world.

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*Expeditionary Power Projection:  
An Operational Concept for the U.S. Navy*

Roger W. Barnett, Ph.D.

Prepared for presentation and discussion at the  
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The past decade has witnessed dramatic shifts in the U.S. security environment. Most noteworthy was the unexpected collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty Organization, which rendered U.S. security policy largely obsolete. This precipitate ending of the Cold War required major adjustments in U.S. national security policy, strategy, and military force structure.

The locus of security policy shifted from a global strategic confrontation with the Warsaw Pact to regionally-based challenges. This complemented changes that had already been made to strengthen the role of the combatant commanders in chief (CINCs) in deterrence and in planning for and conducting armed conflict. Consequently, the Navy and Marine Corps put their Maritime Strategy "on the shelf," and retooled to meet the new environment. Along with this shift in emphasis, and as national military forces were reduced, the leverage afforded by joint and multinational forces became more and more evident. Planning and employment of these forces at the operational level placed new emphasis on operational art.<sup>1</sup> Commanders began focusing on how to attain strategic objectives through operational and tactical successes.

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<sup>1</sup> Operational art: The employment of military forces to attain strategic and/or operational objectives through the design, organization, integration, and conduct of strategies, campaigns, major operations, and battles. Operational art translates the joint force commander's strategy into operational design, and, ultimately, tactical action, by integrating the key activities at all levels of war. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* Joint Pub 1-02 (Washington, D.C.; U.S. Government Printing Office, March 23, 1994): 274.

The Maritime Strategy's successor appeared in the form of a white paper entitled *From the Sea*. It was released in the fall of 1992 by the Secretary of the Navy, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Commandant of the Marine Corps.<sup>2</sup> *From the Sea* was presented as a strategic concept, providing a planning approach to force structure and suggesting to unified commanders what naval forces could optimally accomplish in various theaters in the future.<sup>3</sup>

*From the Sea* rested on assumptions that regional conflicts were replacing the threat of global conflict, and that the Navy's primary theater of action would migrate from the open ocean to the littoral areas of the world. With the publication of *From the Sea*, the Navy entered a new era. Its operational emphasis moved not simply from deep to shallow water, or from fighting a large, capable adversarial navy to one of dealing with smaller, less sophisticated forces, but from open ocean operations to shaping conflict on the land. *From the Sea* was followed in 1994 by the release of a follow-on paper entitled *Forward...From the Sea*.<sup>4</sup> While reiterating the basic tenets of *From the Sea*'s strategic concept, *Forward... From the Sea* underscored the importance of maintaining forward-deployed maritime forces.

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<sup>2</sup> . . . *From the Sea* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> See Bradd C. Hayes, "Keeping the Naval Service Relevant," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, October 1993, 57-60.

<sup>4</sup> The Honorable John H. Dalton, Admiral J.M. Boorda, USN, and General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., USMC, *Forward . . . From the Sea* (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, 1994).

*From the Sea and Forward...From the Sea* provided the strategic foundation and impetus for further refinement of the use of naval forces in support of national and theater strategies. Using the concepts embodied in the theory and practice of operational art, this paper complements the Joint Chiefs' of Staff *Joint Vision 2010* and the Navy's *2020 Vision*. It transposes those documents to the operational level of war in the form of an *operational concept* for the employment of U.S. naval forces.

An operational concept seeks strategic effect from the use of force. Other methods—diplomacy or embargoes, for example—attempt to achieve success through indirect means. The application of military force at the operational level of war, however, links tactics to strategy through the direct accomplishment of *strategic* effects. An operational concept is essential for focusing planning, training, and exercises. It is critical in assisting other services and allies to understand how U.S. naval forces help to ensure success in deterrence, crisis response, and warfighting. It offers anchors for the development of force structure and organization necessary to implement it, and leads to better definition of challenges and to the prioritization of efforts to overcome them.

### **A Naval Operational Concept: Expeditionary Power Projection**

This operational concept, called *expeditionary power projection* (XP<sup>2</sup>), explores how naval forces provide special leverage at the operational level of war. It is *expeditionary* because it is conducted overseas; it is *power projection* because it addresses the direct application of military force—or the threat of the use of force—to achieve U.S. objectives; and it is at the *operational level* because it envisions campaigns, major operations, and battles that seek to achieve strategic effect.

Expeditionary power projection complements the Marine Corps' concept, *Operational Maneuver From the Sea* (OMFTS). Predicated on the premise that naval forces can best serve national interests when they are combat ready and forward deployed, the concept describes how naval forces contribute to deterring aggression, responding to crises, enabling the introduction of other U.S. forces, and exerting and sustaining significant combat leverage as part of a joint or multinational force. Expeditionary Power Projection optimizes the unique capability of naval forces to apply military might from the sea in pursuit of national objectives.

Faced with the dual challenges of regional threats and new technologies, the Navy and Marine Corps have adapted to produce creative organizational arrangements and warfighting practices. Naval forces make major operational contributions to the attainment of U.S. national security objectives through the application of XP<sup>2</sup> consisting of:

- Engaging in Forward Regions,
- Striking and Seizing Targets Ashore,
- Dominating the Battlespace, and
- Ensuring Sustainment.

Naval forces approach the accomplishment of these tasks in innovative ways. For the first time, they will soon have the capability to provide a protective umbrella against theater ballistic missile attack over significant land and water areas. Surface combatants and submarines armed with long-range cruise missiles will offer a powerful deterrent. Teamed with Marine Corps units, naval assets will concentrate fires from platforms dispersed hundreds of miles apart. Armed with

new long-range naval fire support weapons; manned aircraft utilizing precision-guided munitions; unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance, targeting, and attack; and new means for rapid ship-to-objective movement of troops, the evolving Navy/Marine Corps team will provide the operational commander broad options in planning operational fires. Taking advantage of the strengths of naval forces—engaging in forward regions, striking and seizing targets ashore, dominating the battlespace, and ensuring sustainment—the U.S. can respond to challenges with flexible and powerful military options.

The story of expeditionary power projection will unfold in the paragraphs that follow. It proceeds from the commonplace exercise of forward engagement to the most complex, difficult, and unusual of its component parts—striking and seizing targets ashore, dominating the battle-space, and ensuring sustainment. In this way, the operational application of naval capabilities day-to-day as well as in a joint or multinational operational context will be portrayed.

### **Engaging Regionally: Forward Presence, Deterrence, and Crisis Response**

Although the primary U.S. security goal is to deter conflict, the use of military force to secure national security objectives has been necessary in the past and will no doubt be required in the future. Sometime soon—perhaps tomorrow—a U.S. theater commander will be called upon to undertake a campaign or major operation in his region. The commander will, as matter of course, employ allocated forces in an effort to protect a friend or ally, extract or defend U.S. citizens in danger, or thwart the actions of an adversary. As the situation warrants, the commander will design and conduct joint or multinational operations to attain strategic objectives.



In all likelihood, naval forces dispatched to apply combat power ashore will not sail from home waters. They will have been routinely deployed overseas for the dual purposes of reassuring friends and allies and dissuading potential adversaries. Setting favorable terms of engagement does not begin when combatant forces are vectored to a scene of possible military action. Instead, the ability to concentrate superior strength against an enemy's vulnerabilities at the decisive time and place in any theater is increasingly a function of continuous political, diplomatic, and military efforts. Because the seas are free to use in peacetime, naval forces can establish the level of presence deemed necessary, near to where force might be required, while minimizing political costs.

Long before a crisis erupts, naval forces have been engaged in regions of potential conflict. Their presence provides the U.S. a low risk, yet highly sophisticated opportunity to prepare a theater of operations. To be effective, regional engagement requires forces to maintain a high degree of readiness. They must be able to move to a crisis area and respond appropriately on short notice.

Operationally-ready naval forces serve both the theater commander and policymakers by providing them with up-to-date information on the region as well as options to prevent conflict or to ameliorate its effects should it occur. These forward forces can deprive an enemy of his allies, prevent or delay his deployment to favorable locations within the theater, destroy or interrupt his logistics support capabilities, occupy decisive terrain to force him to fight from unfavorable positions, or even threaten to carry the fight to his homeland. Merely by cruising nearby or conducting a port visit in the vicinity, they can force an adversary to formulate his plans and array his military formations in ways he would not otherwise choose. Using electronic warfare, psychological operations, and opera-

tional deception, they can alter a potential adversary's assessment of his situation and prospects for success. In these ways, naval forces influence adversary intentions—and that constitutes a major ingredient of deterrence.

No less important, although perhaps less visible, are the day-to-day contributions made by forward deployed naval forces. They provide reinforcement of friendly governments threatened externally or from within; control of lawlessness, ranging from smuggling and civil disorder to terrorism; protection or extraction of citizens abroad, either peaceably or forcibly; and humanitarian assistance and civic action.

It is often the actions and activities of these forces that provide the dominant battlespace knowledge necessary to shape regional security environments. Multinational exercises, port visits, staff-to-staff coordination—all designed to increase force interoperability and access to regional military facilities—along with intelligence and surveillance operations, are but a few examples of how naval forces engage actively in an effort to set terms of engagement favorable to the United States and its allies. These activities are conducted at low political and economic costs, considering the tangible evidence they provide of U.S. commitment to a region. And they are designed to contribute to deterrence.

Deterrence is the product of both capability and will. To deter a nuclear attack against the United States, its allies, or others to whom it has provided security assurances, for example, the United States maintains a triad of strategic nuclear forces. Ballistic missile submarines act as a primary contributor to the U.S. deterrent posture. By maintaining these submarines in sufficient numbers, by ensuring their invulnerability to disarming attack by any adversary or combination of potential adversaries, and by operating them in ready and secure pos-

tures, the Navy demonstrates the capability and bolsters the political will necessary to deter nuclear aggression.

Deterrence of other undesirable actions by adversaries or potential adversaries is part and parcel of everything naval forces do in the course of their operations—before, during, and after the actual application of combat force. Naval forces underwrite deterrence by showing resolve, and thus they deter adversarial intentions. It is the certainty of a response, one unacceptable to the enemy, that deters. Being on the scene or in the vicinity, and being perceived as capable of rapid, decisive application of force provides the credibility that buttresses deterrence. Both the kind and the number of forces that communicate a deterrent message are important, for potential aggressors can distinguish a show of strength from a show of weakness, and they can be expected to act accordingly. On-scene naval forces, for example, convey the message that the United States is intensely interested in what is taking place in the vicinity, and must be consulted, one way or another, on potential disturbances of the peace. A lack of presence, on the other hand, might convey disinterest and signal that no counteraction will be forthcoming.

That the United States has invested in keeping these ready forces forward and engaged delivers a signal—one that cannot be transmitted as clearly and unequivocally in any other way. Forward deployed forces are backed by those which can surge for rapid reinforcement and can be in place in seven to thirty days. These, in turn, are backed by formidable, but slower deployed, forces which can respond to a major conflict over a period of months.

History has demonstrated, and common sense confirms, that deterrence is always preferable to conflict. This fact makes naval forces a day-to-day bargain in the pursuit of

U.S. national security. In the future, naval forces will be able offer significant protection against interstate blackmail in the form of theater ballistic missiles. These defenses, in combination with powerful naval land-attack options, will enhance the deterrent capabilities of naval forces and make them an even more flexible and effective instrument in America's toolbox.

### **Striking and Seizing Targets Ashore**

CINCs and Joint Force Commanders will seek leverage in all combat functions and forces allocated to them. Thus, they will draw on the strengths afforded by operational intelligence, command and control, maneuver, fires, and logistics, while ensuring operational protection for their forces—whatever their service or national origin.

Among joint and multinational forces assigned for operations, theater commanders should expect to find one or more Naval Expeditionary Task Forces (NETFs). Comprised notionally of a carrier battlegroup and an amphibious ready group, NETFs bring a range of options for striking and seizing targets ashore. Such operations will invariably be undertaken for limited objectives. They will be limited in time, space, and intensity. In order to deny opponents their objectives, U.S. armed forces might be obliged to exercise military control over sea and littoral areas, and even over foreign territory. Such control would extend in time and space only until strategic and operational objectives were attained.

Adversaries, on the other hand, need to control territory—or effectively threaten it—in order to satisfy their political agendas. Their operations at sea, however, would likely not involve the exercise of sea control, but would attempt to *deny* U.S. and friendly forces the ability to control and use the seas. Thus, there is a direct asymmetry in the interests and objectives

of the two sides at the operational level: the United States and its allies seek to control the seas and through the application of combat power to deny the adversary its territorial goals, while the enemy desires to control the land and deny the United States and its allies control of seaward areas.

Of the 191 recognized countries in the world today, 152 are accessible for strike and seize operations by naval forces.<sup>5</sup> These littoral states constitute the primary locales in which NETFs would be employed, but only a fraction of them can be considered countries of concern for U.S. security. Prudence requires that U.S. forces be prepared to conduct combat operations against the most capable of these potential adversaries—those that can reach out militarily to several hundreds of miles and hold America's operations at risk.

Naval Expeditionary Task Forces can be rapidly assembled, and will attempt to take advantage of mobility and stealth to achieve surprise. They are inherently flexible, and can assume a variety of configurations in order to meet an operational commander's needs. If, for example, U.S. or allied submarines were in the theater of operations, they might provide valuable intelligence, extending the operational vision of the commander. Insofar as potential adversaries do not have long-range at-sea reconnaissance and surveillance capability, that shortcoming could be exploited to enhance surprise, maneuver, and the massing of fires.

As naval forces approach the area to which they have been dispatched, operational commanders will have a long

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<sup>5</sup> *Threats in Transition: Marine Corps Mid-Range Threat Estimate, 1995-2005* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 1995): 37.

menu of items to consider. The level of self-protection necessary en route to and within the area of operations will be determined by threat assessment. Meteorological and oceanographic conditions, so often key to operational success, must be factored in. Reconnaissance and surveillance of the adversary will occupy the commander's thoughts, as will the coordination of all friendly forces to achieve the greatest positive effect. Dominating the battlespace, supporting his forces, and setting the terms of engagement—subjects expanded upon later in this paper—will also compete for a commander's attention. A commander's central interest, nevertheless, must be on how to synchronize all forces and capabilities to turn tactical and operational successes into achieving strategic goals.

Maneuvering at sea, naval forces—in concerted action with other joint and multinational forces—can attack targets along the littoral or deeper inland in order to destroy facilities, disrupt enemy operations, isolate the battlespace, and deny use of targeted areas or assets. Naval guns, missiles, aircraft, and troops all participate in strikes. Marines seize, occupy, and defend operational objectives and critical bases. As necessary, naval forces secure ports and airfields for the arrival of additional friendly forces. Ultimately, an operational commander seeks to destroy or neutralize an adversary's center of gravity in order to prevent or discourage further hostile military or political actions.

Contemporary weapons can be applied with great precision from the sea, and naval forces will exploit the synergistic effects of both manned and unmanned systems. The reach of weapons from seaward across the littorals is adequate to cover virtually all of the relevant targets in the world's potential trouble spots. This is because over 80 percent of all states border on the sea, 95 percent of all people live within 600 miles of the coast, and 80 percent of the world's capitals lie within 300

miles of the shore. Increasingly, commanders will be taking advantage of the leverage offered by emerging capabilities in command, control, communications, computing, and intelligence (C<sup>4</sup>I). The U.S. Global Positioning System acts as a baseline for improved methods of detection and targeting, identification, engagement, and battle damage assessment. The “sensor to shooter” approach integrated at the operational level will permit unprecedented knowledge of the battlespace, which will simultaneously increase the effectiveness of the combat actions of the force while minimizing concern for the safety of friendly forces. The conduct and assessment of combat operations in real time will encourage high tempos, close synchronization and sequencing of operational maneuver and fires, and precise evaluations coupled with coordinated re-attack as necessary.

Throughout any campaign or major operation, a commander will coordinate closely with component commanders, and with regional friends and allies to assign available land-based reconnaissance, airlift, tanker, fighter, and attack aircraft. If U.S. airborne, air assault, or special forces are deemed appropriate for the mission, they will be committed to service as well.

To the joint or multinational force commander, NETFs offer forces that:

- Are not heavy, but nevertheless highly mobile and hard-hitting,
- Can conduct forcible entry,
- Can be protected and supported by in-place naval assets until units of other services arrive and become combat ready,

- Can be supported effectively by maritime afloat or prepositioned logistics, and
- Can be extracted with minimum difficulty once assigned tasks have been accomplished.

The operational concept of the Marine Corps envisions high tempo operations ashore directed against targets of strategic or operational significance, seeking directly to influence the outcome of any contest of arms. Expeditionary forces projected in this manner have no need to establish a lodgment and amass fighting strength before embarking on offensive combat operations. Instead, they bypass the build-up phase ashore and apply combat power directly against the enemy. Fast-moving units synchronize their actions ashore to enhance the massing of combat power, and they react quickly to reinforce success or conduct reconnaissance in force for follow-on units. Insofar as possible, they depend on indirect fires supplied by air and surface naval units for key leverage in engaging enemy formations. Light, mobile, flexible Marine Corps units will be highly effective against all except large infantry or heavy tank formations. This non-linear approach allows landing forces to be smaller and ship-to-objective movement to be more rapid than in the past. Even in circumstances where heavy forces must be built up ashore, new concepts and technologies will allow for a smaller and more dispersed footprint than has been historically possible.

Manned aircraft and sea-launched missiles can be employed at long ranges to interdict enemy actions, or directly to support U.S. and friendly forces ashore. Aircraft and missiles of the force are not competing, but complementary capabilities. Manned aircraft are preferred for application in rapidly developing situations, and for economical high intensity operations that promise acceptable levels of risk. Long-range missiles are



employed against fixed, movable, and heavily defended targets. Naval gunnery performs similar functions at traditionally shorter ranges. All of these systems work together to isolate the battlespace from adversary actions, and to prevent enemies from controlling land areas by aggression or by coercion of friends and allies.

The application of combat power by naval forces is facilitated by their deployment near areas of potential problems, and by ease of access to those regions—the seas offering no impediment to free movement. Because they contain integrated forces capable of undersea, surface, air, and land warfare, naval expeditionary task forces can conduct operations as the forward element of a joint task force (JTF). Prompt power projection capability and potential to conduct combined arms warfare both at sea and ashore generate the possibility that naval expeditionary task forces can independently attain strategic and operational objectives. As necessary, a naval commander can also act as the designated commander of a joint task force (CJTF) or as a joint force air component commander.

In the current international security environment, success will pivot on flexible forces that are highly capable, ready and usable, and as close to potential problem areas as possible. Joint and multinational operations will be generally preferred, but the capability to conduct independent operations with naval forces alone will continue to be important. The necessity to act independently will be indicated by the magnitude and particulars of the effort, availability of land bases in the operational theater, contributions of allies, capabilities of the adversary, and geography—to cite the most important ones.

### **Dominating the Battlespace: Setting the Terms of Engagement by Prevention and Protection**

The effective conduct of combat, with minimum losses of personnel and materiel, rests on the ability to dominate the battlespace. Thus, in their planning to conduct major operations and campaigns, CINCs and CJTFs must address the issue of establishing battlespace dominance. Naval expeditionary task forces must either establish or contribute to this objective, regardless of the length of their journey to a crisis or conflict. Naval forces shape their operational environment all along approach routes to the scene of conflict—whether transoceanic or exclusively in the theater of operations—by *setting the terms of engagement*.

Rapid maneuver to prevent effective enemy counteractions assists naval forces in achieving battlespace dominance. Maneuver is *relational*; effective maneuver means that one's own actions are undertaken and accomplished more rapidly than an adversary can react. Maneuver in the theater of operations facilitates not only positioning for striking and seizing, but also:

- Rendering enemy surveillance systems ineffective,
- Paralyzing enemy decision-making systems,
- Suppressing enemy defenses, and
- Targeting and destroying enemy threat platforms and formations before they can be brought to bear.

Well designed and integrated C4I has become fundamental to the success of expeditionary power projection. Rapid and secure communications and data transfer links, between commanders as well as up and down the theater chain of com-

mand, typify the C4I capabilities of today's naval expeditionary task forces. Moreover, the offensive and defensive aspects of command and control warfare (electronic warfare; operational deception; operations, communications, and computer security; psychological operations; and physical destruction) are carefully honed to support expeditionary power projection from the first step in the intelligence preparation of the battlespace, through striking and seizing targets ashore, to the final act of withdrawal.

Establishing dominant knowledge of the battlespace does not imply or require complete appreciation either of friendly or of adversary positions and movement. It means, instead, that U.S. forces understand significantly more than the adversary does about the situation, that knowledge about forces opposing him and even about his own units can be effectively denied to an opponent, and that U.S. on-scene commanders have been provided the ability to control the local action while higher commands monitor general progress. The required speed and multiple tasking of modern combat, coupled with the ability and necessity to delegate decision-making authority to lower and lower levels of command echelons, dictate the need for high quality C4I. By means of these actions, naval forces contribute to establishing operational protection for friendly forces, creating and securing a foundation for achieving national objectives.

The difficulty of establishing battlespace dominance will be eased if secure bases exist in the theater of operations to support land-based forces. Except for the European and Korean theaters, forward-based air and missile defenses are virtually non-existent today, however. To the extent that forward bases are not usable, or lack needed capabilities, the burden of battlespace dominance will fall on naval forces. In this regard, the decline of the U.S. overseas basing structure and the reluc-

tance of other states to grant base use and overflight privileges means that operational commanders will have to rely more on naval capabilities.

Prior intelligence preparation of the battlespace, by submarine, air, and surface surveillance and reconnaissance assets, will be central to ensuring that U.S. forces will be able to carry out their operations on their own terms. Covert platforms, such as submarines, moreover, can provide the commander with options for offensive operations that can be undertaken prior to the establishment of battlespace dominance.

By dominating the battlespace, naval forces contribute to the establishment of robust operational *protection*. The shield furnished for combatant and logistic forces must, because of the nature of potential threats, be three-dimensional. Air and theater ballistic missile defenses provide top cover for on-scene and arriving logistic and combatant forces. Key regional cities and other valuable assets might fall within protected areas as well. In addition to defenses against air threats and mines, a cordon—or blockade—extending from brown water to blue water would be established to protect assets operating in the littoral from submarines or enemy surface ships with anti-ship missiles. Embargoes enforced by naval forces can also prevent an adversary from obtaining important economic or military materials. U.S. and allied surface ships, submarines, and air assets would all contribute to these actions, and their coordination would be synchronized by carefully planned and executed command and control.

Protection and prevention work hand-in-hand to thwart adversary capabilities ashore or at sea. Mine countermeasures, for example, would optimally be implemented by preventing the mines from being laid. If mines are already in place, mine clearance forces will probably need to be brought

to the scene; but in order to sweep effectively, those forces must be protected. Here, again, by suppressing threats to the mine warfare forces, the U.S. can operate on its own terms. Naval forces would also provide protection for air- and sea-ports of debarkation, and operational fires from the sea in support of engaged ground and air forces. This will help ensure that air and ground forces, and the sustainment for them, arrive and can be brought to maximum combat effectiveness safely and efficiently. Prevention and protection thus secure unimpeded access to areas necessary for mission accomplishment.

Drawing on their extended experience in conducting joint operations, and their functional organization as the forward element of a JTF, naval expeditionary task forces offer the framework for a smooth organizational transition. Naval forces routinely practice and employ joint communications and intelligence connectivity, and enjoy weapon systems commonality with other U.S. services. Experience in NATO operations over the past fifty years, the relatively trouble-free multinational operations at sea during Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and progress in interoperability since then add confidence to the safe and effective conduct of future actions. These facts, and the extent to which specific forces will have had the opportunity to train and operate together, help ensure the success of operations that include diverse forces in a variety of geographic settings.

As noted above, naval expeditionary power projection forces cannot undertake major regional combat operations on their own, but enable, facilitate, and enhance such operations. Undoubtedly, in such cases, a Maritime Prepositioned Squadron would be considered for early deployment to the scene. Each of the three squadrons of prepositioned ships—stationed in the European, Pacific, and Southwest Asia theaters—is de-

signed to allow the rapid introduction of an armor-heavy Marine Corps task force, the supporting Marines of which fly into theater to marry with their ship-stowed equipment and supplies in an assembly area. Within ten days of arrival of ships and troops, one, two, or all three of these task forces could be available to initiate or reinforce operations in a major regional conflict.

In the course of fighting a regional conflict, naval forces strike and seize targets ashore from seaward axes in coordination with the joint or multinational force. They do this while continuing their operational protection of both the logistic lines of communication, and of air and land forces within their defensive umbrella. Navy and Marine units might be employed in land operations as they were in the Gulf War, Vietnam, and Korea, but their unique leverage would remain in conducting operational maneuver, fires, and deception from the sea.

Worthy of note, naval forces participating in a regional conflict continue to represent an important hedge against other contingencies. If an emerging situation requires detachment of forces beyond the immediate area of operations—to conduct an evacuation operation or respond to a geographic escalation by the enemy—naval forces would be the most suitable to meet such contingencies because, relative to other forces, they can be disengaged easily and recalled quickly if necessary.

In the event of a second, near-simultaneous major conflict, naval forces would be the forces most likely to redeploy, owing to their inherent strategic mobility and self-contained logistics. Most significant would be the flexible redeployment of carriers, submarines, and cruisers to a second conflict. Ready on arrival, these forces would contend for air superiority

while providing a measure of air defense and interdiction until sufficient land-based air strength could be generated.

The size of naval forces increases in direct proportion to the intensity of a conflict, and their organizational structure alters as more joint and multinational forces are committed to combat, but their operational concept remains the same—striking and seizing targets ashore, operational protection, and logistic support from the sea. Ultimately, their tactical and operational contributions support America's strategic objective of confining conflict and terminating it on terms favorable to the United States and its allies.

### **Ensuring Sustainment: Underwriting the Time Lines**

The maritime operational logistics system that supports the naval expeditionary task force, or if need be the forces fighting an major regional conflict, consists of advance support bases, maritime prepositioned ships, the Combat Logistics Force (CLF), and the U.S. homeland infrastructure. Yet, naval forces are, in the first instance, self-sustaining. They arrive on the scene fully prepared for combat operations. There is no necessity to "close" such combatant forces—to marry pieces of various organizations to produce a fighting whole. Formations of combatant ships do not require separate air defenses, anti-submarine warfare forces, reconnaissance and surveillance, artillery, command and control, or other kinds of combat support or combat service support. Normally accompanied by logistics ships, naval forces arrive at the scene with filled fuel bunkers, spare parts bins, ordnance magazines, and food store-rooms. Replenishment at sea is the norm. Naval task forces have the capability to secure their own movement to an area of concern, and arrive ready to fight and to remain on station as long as necessary.

To resupply forces at sea the "station ships" of the Combat Logistics Force have seakeeping characteristics that allow them to operate integrated with other naval forces. Station ships resupply these forces with fuel, food, ordnance, and other necessities. As stocks are depleted, other components of the CLF—"shuttle ships"—operate between the force and sources of supply. Control of sea areas is necessary for the shuttle ships to carry out their tasks successfully, but if advance support bases or friendly ports and airfields are located in the neighborhood, the problem is simplified. Longer distances to ports of resupply require larger numbers of shuttle ships and extended time frames to implement. At-sea restoration of casualties to equipment and battle damage is expected; a ship's departure from its assignment would be necessitated only for complex depot-level repairs.

Marine Corps units conducting maneuver operations are equipped with organic sustainment ranging from 15 days to two months, depending on the size of the unit involved. Under the Operational Maneuver From The Sea concept, afloat forces will not require build-up of a beach support area before commencing operations ashore, but will instead move directly toward their objectives while being supported from their ship-board seabase. When suitable airfields or ports have been secured, additional forces or supplies can be lifted in by air or sea to extend sustainment beyond what the Marines brought with them or what was available locally.

The three Maritime Prepositioned Squadrons are designed to speed deployment of armor-heavy units for sustained Marine Corps operations ashore. Each squadron carries 30-days of fuel, water, and supplies for a 16,500-man force. One ship in each squadron is combat loaded to permit rapid debarkation of equipment and supplies for a 2,200-man Marine Expeditionary Unit. Additionally, these squadrons have displayed



their value in providing disaster relief. Supplementary support can be provided from the sea by hospital ships and aviation logistic support ships.

If heavy equipment and combat forces of the Army or Air Force should be required, their prepositioned stores can be supplemented by prepositioned ships and later by surge sealift. Eight Fast Sealift Ships and a growing fleet of Ready Reserve Force ships will bring the bulk of their unit equipment and war reserve materials to the scene. Operational protection for forces en route to the scene of action will be provided by naval forces.

All modes of lift—airlift, surge sealift, and prepositioning ships—require a relatively permissive environment at the scene of debarkation. Thus, if a friendly, safe airfield is not available, one might have to be seized, or an expeditionary airfield system put in place. In the face of strong opposition, both direct airlift and sealift support to forces ashore is problematical. In such a case, the size and activity of inserted forces will necessarily be limited to the amount and kind of sustainment that can be provided directly from the sea.

### **Expeditionary Power Projection**

Figure 1 summarizes the operational concept presented in this paper. Striking and seizing targets ashore, dominating the battlespace, and ensuring logistic sustainment invariably overlap: they can be executed in virtually any combination. Forward engagement surrounds the other three parts of expeditionary power projection because it provides the background against which those operations would be undertaken.

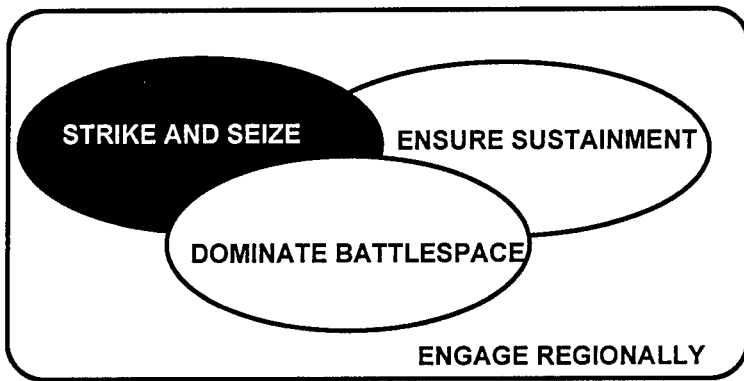


Figure 1

Strategy—the way the United States has chosen to achieve its strategic ends—determines the size and shape of the parts of the diagram in Figure 1. Given a specific adversary, in a particular place, in a discrete geostrategic environment, the strategy will specify how the United States will modulate time, area, and force application to achieve its objectives. The *relationships* among the four parts, however, will be the same regardless of the strategy selected. Operational art, then, addresses what the CINC and the joint force commander need to do to execute the strategy, and how they will do it through campaigns, major operations, and battles.

### Conclusion

This Naval Operational Concept facilitates the application of operational art by the President as well as by theater and operational commanders in unique ways. Naval task forces, with their ability to conduct expeditionary power projection, form the centerpiece of the naval operational concept. In routine peacetime environments, naval forces engage in daily forward operations that establish regional awareness and ultimately set the terms of engagement. Friends and allies are thus reassured, while adversaries and potential adversaries know

that operationally-ready naval forces are in their region. Consequently, they must appreciate the warrant that naval forces convey to counter their aggressive intentions or other actions contrary to international peace and security. In these ways, naval forces exert influence and contribute to deterrence.

Should deterrence waver or fail, naval expeditionary task forces can be dispatched to the scene, confident in their ability to create conditions favorable to the U.S.—to establish battlespace dominance based on prior intelligence preparation of the area. Through preventive and protective actions they strike and seize objectives ashore from secure positions at sea. Such power projection operations might take the form of strikes, interdiction by missiles, airpower, or naval surface gunfire, or they might involve U.S. Marine Corps operations in maneuver from the sea.

Naval forces can provide the secure environment to facilitate and enable the participation of other U.S. and multinational units. They establish three-dimensional operational protection during both the build-up and subsequent combat. In some locations, where land-based facilities are inadequate to support land or air forces, naval protection becomes a precondition for their employment. As operations proceed ashore, naval forces contribute operational fires from the sea and exploit maneuver opportunities to achieve objectives ashore.

The brunt of logistic sustainment for any conflict will be borne by naval forces. Whether from forward prepositioned ships or from sealift ships based in the continental United States, the vast majority of logistic support will arrive on the sea. The transition of these supplies from ships to lines of communications in support of ground operations will be protected and ensured by naval forces.

Arrival of other national or international assets will be facilitated by naval forces. New organizational concepts will ensure any hand-off of functions to a joint or multinational command will be smoothly effected.

Once an operation has been completed—whether a contest of arms was prevented by deterrence, stymied by a maritime embargo, nipped in the bud by prompt naval action, fought with forward deployed joint forces, reinforced by joint and multinational land and air forces, or escalated to a major conflict—naval forces will be the primary protector and provider as forces and equipment are withdrawn. The situation will then have turned full circle: naval forces will once again reclaim their forward engagement roles, and begin anew the processes of intelligence preparation of the battlespace and transmission of the message of freedom and independence. Throughout, the operational commander will focus on how naval forces, independently or in concert with others, help convert tactical and operational successes into strategic victory.

The Maritime Strategy might be on the shelf, but U.S. national interests and the ability to secure them rest on armed forces that must have a maritime base. Geography will ensure that this will continue to be the case for as long as the United States desires to remain a key participant rather than a spectator in global development and security. That being true, the capability to project expeditionary power will endure, whether in the form of the concepts presented here or not. For today, and for the next several decades, expeditionary power projection will underwrite the nation's security and help to shield U.S. friends and allies from the effects of an unstable and turbulent world.

*Even with all the changes in the world, some basic facts endure . . . We are a maritime nation . . . As long as these facts remain true, we need naval forces that can dominate the sea, project power, and protect our interests.*

*President Bill Clinton*