

**ORGANIZING TO CONTROL
THE GLOBAL MARITIME
COMMONS**

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2011

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-06-2011		2. REPORT TYPE Program Research Project		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Organizing to Control the Global Maritime Commons				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Colonel Philip J. Ridderhof				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) COL (RET) Robert Smith Department of Distance Education				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT Access and dominance in the global commons, air, space, cyberspace and the sea, are the foundations of United States strategy. As the sea is the original global commons, the principles of classic Maritime Strategy underlie the current National Security Strategy (NSS) and its subordinate strategic guidance documents (National Defense Strategy and National Military Strategy). However, the Unified Command Plan (UCP) has assigned only the global commons of space and cyberspace to their own respective functional combatant commands. This paper examines the idea of a Maritime Functional Combatant Command that would command and control naval operations via Fleets organized around forces, as opposed to areas, and located in key locations to facilitate global flexibility. Such a command has the potential to better link global maritime operations and to better leverage the mobility and extended operational reach of modern naval weapons. Operations of this construct are examined through the missions of Sea Control, Power Projection, and Theater Security Cooperation. Challenges with this construct are also addressed.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Naval, Navy, Unified Command Plan					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UNLIMITED	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 28	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	b. ABSTRACT UNCLASSIFIED	c. THIS PAGE UNCLASSIFIED			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)

USAWC PROGRAM RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Phillip J. Ridderhof, USMC
TITLE: Organizing to Control the Global Maritime Commons
FORMAT: Program Research Project
DATE: 1 June 2011 WORD COUNT: 6,022 PAGES: 28
KEY TERMS: Naval, Navy, Unified Command Plan
CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

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ORGANIZING TO CONTROL THE GLOBAL MARITIME COMMONS

The world's oceans are the oldest of the "global commons" and have long been the domain the United States has had to control in order to assure its security. US military organization, as expressed in the Unified Command Plan (UCP), has evolved to recognize the "newer" global commons of space and cyberspace with global Functional Combatant Command (FCC) oversight to better coordinate actions in these domains. However, international waters, which make up over 70% of the globe, are divided among continentally based Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs). This division places seams across the maritime commons and inhibits the full realization of naval forces' inherent flexibility and mobility to gain and maintain access to crisis areas and to support other operations from the sea. A global Maritime FCC (MFCC) that would command naval operations via a set of Fleet HQs, separate from the GCC and its subordinate component structure, would provide the unity of effort necessary to match the national military strategy focus on the global commons.

US Strategy and the Global Commons

The global commons are space, cyberspace, international airspace, and international waters. The commons are the "connective tissue" of the international system, and are outside the sovereignty of any single state. These domains are all critical to national security. They are simultaneously the pathways for international trade and communication, the avenues of approach for adversaries to attack, and the staging areas for the US to project its power.¹

Current US strategy documents place heavy emphasis on the global commons. Both the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR 2010) and the 2011 National Military

Strategy (NMS 2011) highlight their importance and the fact that the US is at risk of being denied access to the commons.² Overcoming “anti-access” strategies, which prevent entry into a theater of operations, or “area denial” strategies, which prevent freedom of maneuver within a theater, is a priority for both US military force planning, and for developing joint operating concepts. In fact, the manner in which the US military describes its requirement to control and utilize the global commons in pursuit of overall US national interests and National Security Strategy is reminiscent of a classic maritime strategy, just expanded to encompass the newer domains.

A maritime strategy can only be wielded by a maritime power, but it is not simply a naval strategy. Maritime strategy leverages control of the sea, using the entire joint force, in order to achieve its objectives. The strategy first denies an adversary use of the sea, by cutting off access to resources and international connections. The maritime power then seeks continental allies who can provide forces for any large land campaigns that would be necessary. The maritime power subsidizes these allies through its economic power, derived from the country’s maritime trade. The maritime power projects power, at the time and place of its choosing—based on control of the sea—towards decisive points. The combination of economic strangulation, leveraging allies for land attack, and selective power projection enables a maritime strategy to succeed.³

The current US military strategy espouses a similar approach, broadly leveraging all the global commons. In pursuit of national interests to secure the homeland, as well as that of allies and partners, and to establish a stable and democratic world order, the US seeks to solidify its economic well-being—a well being based on the free movement

of goods and services via the global commons. Military efforts in the global commons ensure their security for friendly use and also deny their use to adversaries. US strategy emphasizes establishing relationships with international partners, and providing security force assistance to improve allies' ability to directly counter adversaries. Finally, the US maintains robust power projection capabilities that leverage control of the commons. In summary, US strategy is to control the global commons, securing them for our own use, and denying them to our adversaries. From that position of advantage, we assist and leverage allies on the ground, while directly applying power projection at critical junctures. This is a strategy based in classic maritime theory.⁴

The advantages of this maritime-characterized strategy are many. The strategy is a natural consequence of the US geographic situation, surrounded by two oceans and two friendly land borders. The US connections with the international system are primarily through the global commons. This strategy provides options to the US on where and when to engage, and on what terms. It also allows the US to focus on developing its military capabilities to leverage the commons. The same capabilities that assure access and freedom of maneuver are the same that support power projection. Utilization of the commons does not require comprehensive superiority throughout the domains, but rather it requires the ability to exert control at critical points in the domains, at the critical times. The flexibility engendered by a strategy based on control of the commons allows the US to make use of the Janus-faced principles of mass and economy of force. However, to realize this strategy requires prioritizing a global perspective on the allocation of resources, and the conduct of operations in the commons, over a regional focus.⁵

The Unified Command Plan and Strategy

The current US military framework does not prioritize a global perspective on the commons; it is regionally focused and land-centric. The key “warfighting” commands are those GCCs that command and conduct military operations within their assigned boundaries. With the possible exception of US Pacific Command (USPACOM), the GCCs are generally mapped from certain land regions outward. In a real sense, the global commons are at the periphery of each GCC’s Area of Responsibility (AOR). Thus, each GCC sees only the portions of the global commons within their AOR and sees them from the narrow perspective of how they impact accomplishing the GCC’s missions in its core land mass. This framework supports each GCC’s individual operations, but it inhibits a coherent global view of the commons and the strategic conduct of operations. ⁶

There are Functional Combatant Commands (FCCs) that do direct global operations for certain functions. While these FCCs command forces and can also command operations, by and large, they operate in support of GCC regional operations. The FCCs perform resource allocation and support functions, not operations or “warfighting” functions. The FCCs’ focus is to manage resources and efforts between the six individual bins of the GCCs.⁷

In command of this GCC and FCC structure is the Secretary of Defense, who has the senior uniformed military officer, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), as an advisor. The Secretary and CJCS are supported by a Joint Staff. The Joint Staff, however, is legally restricted from operating as a “general staff” to aggressively directly command or supervise strategic operations; it works via the combatant commands. The joint staff primarily manages apportionment of support to

the GCCs.⁸ The GCCs compete for the pool of service resources and FCC support to meet their assigned regional missions. The system clearly places the six GCCs at the center of the US global strategic framework, but each GCC focuses solely on its own region.

One of the FCCs, US Strategic Command, has authority for global military operations over two of the global commons: space and cyberspace. These responsibilities are for forces and functions, not control of actual “battlespace” (which would be problematic in terms of cyberspace, but conceivable in terms of Space). The maritime commons, which is legally defined as all waters outside of the 12 mile limit from states, and international airspace, which is actually the airspace above international waters, are both divided among the GCCs.⁹

The Nature of the Maritime Domain and Naval Forces

International seas have both shared and unique traits when compared to the other global commons. Per the definition of “commons,” they are under the sovereign control of no state or other single actor. In times of peace, the same seas can be plied by US, allied, unfriendly, and even non-state military or commercial shipping. Economically, 90% of global trade is conducted over the seas. Unique among the commons, the seas are the only domain where significant manpower and equipment can persistently operate, either stationary or mobile, while remaining in international waters. Although the same could be said of space and international airspace, the amount of forces and equipment that can be massed or dispersed at sea is exponentially greater. The sea is also vast, providing multiple options for routes or positioning naval forces. However, the sea can also be considerably constrained at certain critical chokepoints, and as it nears land, the littoral areas.¹⁰

Deciding where and when to control the sea is based on the fundamental fact that people live on land. Ultimately, the consequences of political decisions and military operations are felt where populations and governments reside. While admitting the ability for ships to persistently remain at sea for extended periods of time, the maritime commons are primarily conduit spaces. From a systems perspective, the oceans are links, not nodes. Actions and operations on the oceans are measured by how they influence, for good or bad, what happens ashore. For the United States, the “origination” node for all actions and operations is the continental homeland. Within the maritime link, the destination nodes are at the other end of Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) that are only restricted when land masses pinch into seas at certain points. Traveling along the length of a SLOC requires no change in transportation mode for almost the entire journey. The only possible exceptions are specialized means for making the transition from ship to shore, or shore to ship, depending on the nature of the land-sea interface, for instance, pier, beach, etc.. From a strategic perspective, the maritime commons are a single domain that does not easily divide around the globe.¹¹

Operating in this single domain drives naval forces to operate from a global perspective. Support to a land campaign in any region of the world requires the ability to use the sea from the US ports of embarkation all the way to the area of operations. While the United States has not recently been challenged in home waters, or in “blue water,” which makes up most of the SLOCs, modern state and non-state adversaries are fielding more capabilities, both symmetric and non-symmetric, that threaten the use of the SLOCs along their entire length. While SLOCs will not normally be contested along their whole length, US maritime forces must be prepared to control the sea at any

point an adversary may choose to threaten. A disruption at any point will potentially hinder operations in multiple theaters, thus, the maritime component to strategic or regional operations is necessarily global in execution .¹²

Depending on the size and scope of an area, the choice of where and when to seek positive sea control, whether driven by the threat or a certain course of action, is a significant strategic or operational decision. The nature of the sea characterizes how it can be controlled. Failure to control an area does not necessarily mean that someone else controls it. Maritime areas can be described as undisputed, contested, or controlled by one party or another. Undisputed areas are those where no party actively seeks to control the sea. The normal state of most of the global maritime commons is undisputed and available to all. In order to control, or contest control of, an area of the sea an actor must place force there and employ them in active Sea Control operations. Sea Control requires applying superior combat power to deter, destroy, or drive off adversaries from the area in question. Sea control can be exerted from seagoing platforms or from land-bases. The degree and nature of sea control a force can exert is defined by its capability and operational reach. Operational reach, in turn, is a combination of the ability to surveil and bring combat power to bear on an adversary.¹³

The modern US Navy achieves its ability to effectively apportion and apply combat power across the global maritime commons and over extensive regional sea areas through the inherent mobility and operational reach of its platforms, and by leveraging capabilities in the other global domains, air, space, and cyberspace. A single ship, or strike group, can conduct inter-theater travel within days. The operational reach of its modern sensors and missile systems is measured in hundreds of miles. Modern

ships are also multi-mission capable. For example, a Burke-class Destroyer (DDG) can simultaneously carry out land attack missile strikes, while providing both sensor and kinetic capabilities against air, surface and sub-surface threats. The result is that naval forces control sea areas by providing a dispersed, networked, and overlapping grid to find, target, and engage multiple threats. The inherent mobility of naval assets means that they can achieve persistent sea control over a given area, then rapidly shift to new maritime territory as the threat adjusts or operations demand.¹⁴

Their capabilities provide great strategic and operational flexibility to execute sea control operations along a global SLOC, but naval forces are still limited by capacity. The area and period of coverage at any one time is constrained by the amount and types of platforms, the specific sensors and ordnance they carry, and the ability to sustain their presence. The Navy's need to conduct corrective and preventive maintenance, and to rotate personnel limit's its ability to maintain ships forward. Operating large complex platforms at sea degrades both their human and machine components over time. If deployed for long periods, without sufficient time for maintenance, training, and crew morale, a ship will eventually cease to function effectively. In general, to support a continual presence of a single ship at sea requires multiple ships in the inventory to account for rotational imperatives. Once deployed, however, the inherent mobility of naval forces means that they can rapidly respond from one global location to another.¹⁵

Similar to the division of the maritime commons among GCC AORs, Maritime forces are either assigned to or under the operational control of the GCCs. GCCs normally further delegate operational control to their Navy Component Commander

(NCC). These NCCs, sometimes designated as the GCC's Joint Force Maritime Component Command (JFMCC), conduct all maritime operations in the GCC's AOR. An NCC commands its assigned forces via the Maritime Operations Center (MOC). The MOC enables the NCC commander to direct its naval forces, but it is defined first by its geography, and second by the forces it commands. Although an NCC's maritime AO is permanent, its forces are assigned on a relatively temporary basis and are subject to change. Thus the NCC, via the MOC, is regionally focused in planning and conducting operations, using what assets it's allocated.¹⁶

As each GCC is focused on its AOR, each NCC is likewise only concerned with the maritime operations in that AOR. A SLOC will emanate from one GCC (normally US Northern Command) and may pass through 1-2 other AORs before terminating in the operational area. There is no single commander to consider the whole length. The maritime commons are viewed through the collective perspectives of their regional parts, not as a global whole. Similarly, the mobility and reach of naval forces cannot be fully leveraged. Movement or firing weapons across AOR boundaries is either a strategic level decision, requiring a Secretary of Defense directed change of operational control, or it requires GCC-to-GCC agreement before, or during, a crisis. Currently, cross-AOR coordination is unwieldy.

The current regionally focused DoD organization does not match a strategy based on global control of the commons and flexible power projection. In the case of naval forces specifically, the dispersal of forces and operational planning to the GCCs both contradicts the character of the global maritime domain, and inhibits the true

flexibility that modern naval forces can provide. It is time to consider an alternative structure for leveraging power in the maritime domain.

The Framework: Hubs, Fleets and a Maritime Functional Component Command

A recent Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) report addressed the issue of US Navy capacity versus global requirements by offering options based on “hubs.” The report defines a hub as an ocean area where naval forces concentrate. Selected for geographic access to multiple regions, hub-basing enables naval forces to rapidly move and operate on both strategic and operational levels. The two main hubs described in the report, based on the anticipated threats and probably location of significant US action, are the Indian Ocean/Gulf of Aden area and the Western Pacific Ocean. The CNA report described five options: a “2 hub” Navy, with major forces deployed to both hubs; a “1+ hub” Navy, with major forces deployed primarily to one hub or the other; a “shaping” Navy where the forces would be spread to all regions focusing on Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) and conflict deterrence; a “surge” Navy that would remain in home waters and respond to crises; and finally, a “status quo” Navy that seeks to mass at both hubs and carry on a robust TSC program in all regions. For the purposes of this paper, the merits of the options are less important than the potential strategic application of the hub concept.¹⁷

The CNA report uses the hub concept primarily to highlight issues of strategic resourcing, geographic choices, and operational capabilities. However, they also provide a fresh perspective on the global employment of naval forces. Identification of ocean-centric hubs also serves to reframe how global boundaries affect maritime operations. For example, a naval force in the Indian Ocean hub is within days of moving between US Central Command, US African Command, US European Command and

US Pacific Command AORs. From certain positions in the northwestern corner of the Indian Ocean, weapons on Navy ships can simultaneously engage in at least two GCCs AORs.¹⁸ Freed of present GCC boundaries, a hub-based allocation of naval forces presents new possibilities for their operations. Hubs could naturally be constructed around some or all of the world's oceans and major seas:

- The Indian Ocean/Gulf of Aden
- The Western Pacific
- The Eastern Pacific (to include the west coast of South America)
- The North Atlantic (North America and North European coasts, including the Baltic Sea)
- The South Atlantic (Caribbean Sea, South American east coast, and the west African coast)
- The Mediterranean and Black Seas
- The Arctic Ocean

It is immediately apparent that this division of the globe does not match the current GCC AOR boundaries from the UCP.

The CNA report did not explicitly address global command and control of naval forces, but the implications of a hub-based concept are clear. If the Navy cannot be everywhere at once, and should be focused in certain priority areas, how can the US mitigate risk in those “uncovered” maritime areas outside of the hubs? The answer is to loosen maritime forces from the boundary-driven and single-GCC operational control constraints that characterize the current US military framework. Such a naval organization, with appropriate command authorities and relationships with GCCs, could

provide sea control and power projection from the sea in an efficient and effective manner throughout the globe.

The construct needed is a Maritime Functional Combatant Command (MFCC) to exercise combatant command of hub-based naval forces across the globe. The Indian Ocean hub, described above, demonstrates the need for a higher command that can assist with apportionment of naval forces among adjacent GCCs. However, the real value of a MFCC would be as the connecting tissue across the entire global maritime commons. The MFCC would be responsible for the seamless sea control across the global SLOC that supports every regional campaign conducted by GCCs. Associating the MFCC with existing U.S. Navy Service headquarters would link long term sustainment of naval forces with short term operations. The MFCC would command via direct combatant command of hub-forces and support relationships with GCCs. In this construct, the critical subordinate players are numbered fleets and the existing NCCs with their MOCs.

The logical choices for hub-based maritime commands are the numbered Fleets of the US Navy. The current U.S. doctrinal definition of a numbered fleet is, “A major tactical unit of the Navy, immediately subordinate to a major fleet command and comprising various task forces, elements, groups and units for the purpose of prosecuting specific naval operations.”¹⁹ However, driven by the GCC-centric framework of the UCP, the Navy’s current operational organization and its numbered fleets are associated with maritime areas of operations, not forces. Modern numbered fleets either serve as NCCs, or are geographically oriented subordinates to NCCs.²⁰ The fleet is now primarily defined by its maritime AO, and only secondly by the naval forces that

operate within its boundaries. This is a subtle, but significant difference from the fleet being principally defined by a grouping of ships that are operating together towards a common mission, regardless of physical location. If the definition of the numbered Fleet were returned to its original forces-based focus, however, it would provide a vehicle to conduct maritime command and control outside of the confines of the GCC-based NCCs and AOR boundaries. Operational Fleets, defined by the forces they command and not their AO, would enable hub-based operations.

The existence of hub-based fleets outside of GCC command, however, does not obviate the requirement to retain a maritime command and control capability within the GCCs. The NCCs, and their MOCs, would continue to play a critical role to command and control certain maritime operations on behalf of the GCC, especially those requiring direct and close coordination with other joint forces in the littorals. The NCCs would also play a vital supporting role to the MFCC and the Fleets in understanding both the maritime environment and GCC operations within their respective AORs. Via the NCCs, the MFCC could leverage globally connected MOCs to gain a comprehensive strategic picture of the global maritime commons. Freed of the requirement to exercise constant command and control of large naval forces, the present NCC MOCs could be significantly reduced in size.

Employing the Framework: Sea Control, Power Projection, and Theater Security Cooperation

Three general categories of maritime operations facilitate examination of how such a construct could operate. The fundamental mission of maritime power is Sea Control. While it has already been addressed in some detail, it is important to note that sea control is a mission that spans the spectrum of conflict. At the higher end, sea

control is associated with conventional operations to keep sea lanes open for friendly use. At the lower end, sea control expresses itself as “maritime security operations,” that consist of operations to assure control of sea areas from irregular, or non-state threats.²¹ Counter-piracy is an example of maritime security operations. Power projection, broadly defined, is the use of capabilities at sea to conduct, influence or support operations on land. The two most commonly known power projection operations are strike, such as that from aircraft and missiles, and amphibious operations. For the purpose of this paper, however, power projection includes those operations where maritime forces directly integrate and support other joint forces for missions other than controlling the sea. With this understanding, the Navy contribution to Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and to Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Response (HA/DR) operations also fall into the Power Projection category.²² Finally, Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) combines aspects of both Sea Control and Power Projection with Security Force Assistance and international partnering activities. Because of its unique nature, TSC is called out separately.²³ These three broad categories provide the basis to examine the proposed MFCC and Fleet organization.

Sea Control is the fundamental purpose of naval forces,²⁴ and it is in the execution of sea control operations that the MFCC and Fleet construct probably has its greatest utility. As previously described, sea control, even in support of a regional campaign, is a global mission, as the SLOC will necessarily extend back to the Continental US for operations. The MFCC provides the global perspective on where to position and employ maritime forces across the entire length of the SLOCs. Commanding and controlling operations via the Fleets at various hubs, and with NCCs

providing supporting information, the MFCC provides strategic unity of command across the maritime domain and ensures that Naval forces are utilized to their maximum effectiveness and efficiency, unencumbered by AOR boundaries. Additionally, the MFCC provides a single global maritime commander to better coordinate with adjacent FCCs, such as US Strategic Command, for cross-domain operations. At the operational/tactical level, the Fleets will operate based on the character of the regional maritime domain, the threat, and its forces assigned, to provide focused and tailored sea control operations where necessary, unencumbered by cross-AOR boundary constraints. The NCCs, while in a supporting role, also play an important part in coordinating with their GCC and adjacent components for land and air-based support to the Fleet and MFCC for Sea Control operations. The unity of command established through the MFCC and the Fleets, supported by coordination with the NCCs, provides unity of effort to deny adversaries maritime seams to exploit. Given the expected resource constraints in the future, and the increased importance to national strategy to deploy forces via the sea, the MFCC and Fleet construct will assure sea control with the US maritime assets at hand.²⁵

Power Projection is use of the sea to support, or coordinate with other joint commands for missions not on the sea. The MFCC and Fleet framework likewise play a supporting role in this mission. In support of a GCC campaign, the NCC takes center stage in planning and coordinating for maritime power projection. A Fleet could be assigned a Support relationship to a GCC, or command of maritime forces could be transferred from the MFCC/Fleet to the GCC, to be exercised in the current fashion by the NCC, through either operational or tactical control.²⁶ The existence of one or more

Fleets in the area allows for naval forces to position in locations where they can rapidly shift, or mass effects, to support a GCC without the necessary negotiation with other GCCs, or requirement for National-level approval to cross AOR boundaries. This makes the best use of the strategic mobility and operational reach of maritime forces.

In addition to facilitating strategic mass and economy of force, the existence of the Fleet as a command and control element separate from the NCC structure provides an important capability to the joint force commanders for power projection operations, especially amphibious operations. Currently, the Navy's "inventory" of command and control elements includes the NCC, which must maintain AOR-wide responsibilities at all times, directly down to Strike Group command elements. Strike Groups, either Carrier Strike Groups (CSGs) or Expeditionary Strike Groups (ESGs), are one-star led HQs that are proficient in a tactical range and span of naval operations.²⁷ A large-scale amphibious operation, especially in a significant threat environment, requires the capability to command and control multiple strike groups, a large Marine Corps landing force, and other joint elements. It is probably beyond the capacity of a single Strike Group HQs, but if assigned to an NCC, this tactical mission must compete with the NCC's ongoing theater-responsibilities. The existence of separate Fleet command elements, which could be placed under the command of a GCC for a specific operation, provides the flexibility for scalable power projection operations.

Included in Power Projection, BMD represents a special case of coordination with joint elements, that inherently crosses AOR lines and is globally strategic in nature.²⁸ Similar to its utility to coordinate maritime operations with global cyberspace and space

operations, the MFCC and Fleet construct facilitates navy involvement in evolving strategic and operational BMD capabilities.

Theater Security Cooperation (TSC), also known as “Phase 0” operations, is a critical part of the national strategy to leverage allies and partners to address adversaries throughout the globe. Based on the regional and country-specific nature of TSC, the NCCs remain front and center for planning and conducting maritime TSC. However, the very nature of the maritime domain, and movement of naval forces, drives cross AOR-coordination to get the most out of naval TSC planning. A ship directed from CONUS will potentially pass through multiple AORs to get to a specific TSC operating area. The MFCC, via its hub-based Fleets, could provide the Coordinating Authority²⁹ to plan naval TSC in order to meet multiple GCC requirements in the most efficient manner. Additionally, Naval forces that conduct TSC are always fundamentally multi-mission ships that must quickly be able to shift to higher priority missions, either in Sea Control or Power Projection. Given the rapid mobility of ships, the sourcing Fleet can ensure that assets dedicated to TSC are also linked into these other missions.

Challenges: Unity of Command, Battlespace and more Headquarters

While there are benefits of a new construct for command and control of maritime forces, there are also obvious challenges to such a significant change to US military strategic organization. The first and foremost issue is unity of command. The MFCC and Fleet construct provides greater unity of command for maritime operations, especially at the strategic level. However, this comes at the expense of joint unity of command under the individual GCCs at the operational level. This highlights a fundamental aspect of unity of command; it cannot be achieved simultaneously at all levels and across all domains. Creating joint military organization is a choice on where to focus unity of

command. Choosing where to place unity of command prioritizes unity of effort at a certain level. The current UCP framework prioritizes unity of command at the individual GCCs. While this has been the natural outgrowth of US military organization, especially since the passage of Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986, it is not necessarily the correct organization for moving into the future. As a global power, with potentially relatively diminishing resources, the US needs to relook its organization and ensure it aligns with its chosen strategy. The GCC-centric approach is regionally-based and “demand-based” in terms of carrying out national strategy and allocating DoD forces. The MFCC represents a change to that paradigm to focus on global commons first, with effective and efficient global apportionment of maritime forces. Just as the present existence of the GCC’s does not prevent unity of effort along the strategic axis of maritime operations, the change to a MFCC does not mean that joint forces cannot enjoy unity of effort within a GCC AOR. Because it is such a paradigm shift in the command and control of significant joint forces, there will be great resistance and questioning of its execution. However, this potential challenge should not prevent serious consideration of the MFCC concept.³⁰

A second challenge to this concept is that of battlespace allocation. Unity of effort in operations has two aspects: forces and battlespace. Forces have already been addressed. Battlespace, in contrast, is a different matter. The division of the globe into GCC AORs drives a simplicity that clarifies responsibility for operations in all areas. While the US doctrine accounts for FCC’s commanding operations within GCC AORs, such as Special Operations, for the most part, these are temporary and discrete missions.³¹ The MFCC concept implies much greater and extended operations in

different GCC AORs. There are multiple ways to address this challenge. As the GCC's are land-focused, Fleets (and by implication, the MFCC), could be provided maritime Areas of Operations (AOs) within which to conduct their operations, especially Sea Control. These AOs would probably match the hub geography and cross current AOR boundaries. The key issue will be where to draw the boundary when moving into the littoral areas. For Power Projection and TSC, MFCC and Fleet maritime operations would largely be conducted within established GCC AORs, with forces either OPCON, TACON, or in Support of the GCC. Similar to command of forces, the choice of battlespace allocation never eliminates seams, but simply creates them in different areas. The MFCC and Fleets drive a different perspective and provide different options from the present single GCC-centric framework.

Final challenges to this construct are that the creation of the MFCC and its accompanying Fleets results a net increase in naval command and control elements over the present force structure, and that it creates a potentially awkward division of labor between the NCCs and Fleets. Addressing the latter concern, under the new structure, the NCCs would not have to maintain as robust a capability to execute command and control across their maritime AOR. Their actual role would be one more of planning, and coordinating with their respective GCC, and other service and joint functional components. The NCC MOC would shape and set conditions within the theater, as well as providing the stream of maritime-specific intelligence and awareness for both their GCC and the MFCC/Fleets. The Fleets could be established using resources freed up from the NCCs. The Fleet's focus is command and control of the naval forces assigned only for the Fleet's missions. Fleet AOs, if formally established,

would be sized to match Fleet operational reach. The strategic and operational level of command and control would reside at the MFCC, allowing the Fleet to focus primarily on the tactical planning and execution of its missions. This is not a new structure for the Navy, being similar to the division between navy fleet commanders and “ocean area” commanders in WWII and pre-Goldwater-Nichols.³² The relationship between the MFCC and the GCCs, which will manage the relationships between the Fleets and NCCs, will not be without drawbacks and complications, but the present framework also has challenges. The deciding factor must be which framework better supports execution of strategy with the resources provided.

An argument against standing up these new naval commands is that more tail is being created at the expense of tooth. This, however, is not necessarily the case. Dividing strategic and operational capabilities into categories of forces and command elements conveys a misleading picture of how military power is actually brought to bear in executing strategy. Properly constructed, the global network of the MFCC, its Fleets, and the supporting NCCs, will make the most effective use of limited naval forces, ensuring they are used to the maximum extent of their mobility and operational reach. The current structure may feature less overall investment in command and control “tail” than in the proposed construct, but it is arguably less effective and efficient in the use of those forces across the global maritime domain.

An alternative structure compromise would be to “dual-hat” the present NCCs as responsible to both their GCCs and the MFCC. This construct would likely result in those command elements being over-taxed and unable to focus on any one mission. It would also place the burden of reconciling competing GCC and MFCC requirements at

the NCC level, rather than at the MFCC-GCC level, where priorities can be sorted out at the strategic level, thus helping to simplify operational and tactical planning/execution. Also, as previously mentioned, the creation of the Fleet provides a capable command element for large-scale forcible entry operations from the sea, filling a current gap in naval capabilities. The overall increase in structure dedicated to command and control, rather than tactical elements must be acknowledged, yet it must be considered within the context of the total value gained for effective allocation and application of limited naval combat power across the global maritime commons.

Conclusion

US military strategy leverages the nation's natural geographic position, economic power, and its capability to field significant expeditionary forces with global reach. With a continuing global role, however, the US still faces resource limitations. The "maritime character" of this strategy reflects an understanding of those limitations by focusing efforts on ensuring access and use of the global commons, working through allies and partners to conduct extended regional campaigns, and maintaining power projection capabilities to decisively influence any region at the time and place of choice. However, the current GCC-centric nature of US joint doctrine and global military organization does not necessarily reflect the optimal construct to implement this strategy. In the maritime domain, responsibility for this broad and critical global commons is divided between multiple GCCs whose focus is both regional and landward. Establishment of a strong Maritime Functional Combatant Command to execute global naval operations breaks the present UCP paradigm and offers alternative strategic organization, better suited to execute present military strategy into the future.

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