

formats were carefully compared to the most recent joint texts prepared by the United States Department of War. It was determined that the basic steps of the Estimate of the Situation were completely compatible with joint and other Service procedures. Subsequently, in 1948, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) published the first doctrinal manual, *The Naval Manual of Operational Planning*, on naval operational planning based on the original draft submitted by Admiral Spruance. There is sufficient evidence to suggest that in 1948, the U.S. Navy was, in fact, the proud owner of a working, written, comprehensive, joint-compatible, and effective doctrine for naval operational planning.

The advent of the Cold War and the perceived monolithic Soviet threat of the early 1960s greatly affected the way the U.S. Navy looked at the formal planning process. Between 1960 and 1980, naval forces, or at least ships at sea, concentrated almost entirely on two types of missions: self-defense and fire support. There were no high-seas fleet engagements or major amphibious assaults during this time. Self-defense meant countering the threat—mainly from the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)—and was much more focused on identifying the threat than it was in selecting and executing a course of action (COA). Likewise, planning for naval gunfire support and air strike missions required great emphasis on the mechanics of delivering ordnance swiftly and accurately rather than on the selection of a COA that was adequate, feasible, and acceptable. In general, this kind of planning became known as threat-based planning as opposed to classic mission-based planning. During the latter, the mission is identified, and the work is approached backward through intermediate or enabling objectives with all their associated decisions and details that, when orchestrated and executed correctly, provide for the best chance of mission accomplishment.

For what the U.S. Navy was doing on a day-to-day basis during this period, identifying the threat and relying on standard operating procedures (SOPs) to counter it was probably a perfectly acceptable way of solving the specific military problems at hand. The larger planning picture (for major contingencies or global war with the former USSR) seemed to be totally eclipsed by the day-to-day routine. Joint staffs did big-picture planning, and most lower echelon naval officers never made the connection between daily operations underway and anything that joint staffs did or were supposed to be doing. If there was a mistake made during this period, it was one of omission. A large part of the Navy seemed to be willing to ignore the requirement for formal planning (and formal planning education) altogether. Everything learned during World War II about planning processes, procedures, and methodology seemed to have been discarded since it did not offer the easiest and quickest way to solve the current, lowest-level, tactical military problems.

The characteristics of today's complex global environment have created the conditions where the U.S. Navy must be prepared for a wide range of dynamic situations. Moreover, the nature of modern naval operations—which must span from open ocean to deep inland—interlinks continuously with other Services, countries, and means of national power and it often places the lowest tactical commander in critical strategic roles, necessitating that a thorough planning process be used. Consequently, Navy planning of today has migrated more toward mission-based rather than threat-based planning. However, due to the nature of naval operations, forces at sea, unlike the other Services, require specific degrees of threat-based planning coupled with planning for specified missions. The specific degree of threat-based planning is a function of the mission, environment, and threat scenario. Ultimately, naval planning in a contested environment is most frequently based upon the fundamental need for the joint force to gain and maintain some degree of sea control.

1.3 OPERATIONAL ART AND DESIGN

One concept linked to military planning is operational design. Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operations Planning*, provides an in-depth study of the elements of operational design. Operational design is defined in that publication as the conception and construction of the framework that underpins a campaign or a major operation plan and its subsequent execution. It forms the basis for military planning and is translated into actions by the use of another key concept, namely operational art.

Operational art is defined as 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 risk. Operational art requires broad vision and the ability to anticipate. It considers the arrangement and employment of both friendly and adversary forces and other capabilities in time, space, and purpose. Moreover, to understand operational art, the commander can think of military planning as having aspects of both science and art. The science involves such tangible aspects as

disposition and number of ships, aircraft, weapons, supplies, and consumption rates as well as the interplay of operational factors, such as time and space, that affect employment of the naval force. On the other hand, the art of military planning is more conceptual. This is where the commander and staff identify the objectives and outline the broad concept of operations (CONOPS). As opposed to breaking down the situation, this is where the commander and staff design their plan and think through the application of the principles of war. Though a more thorough study of operational art is beyond the scope of this publication, the naval commander and the planning staff must comprehend that the use of operational art in arranging events or phases of the operation, integrating operational functions, and focusing on achieving the strategic objective is essential in the planning process.¹

One other point that must be remembered is that while the process is important, the product or outcome of the planning is even more vital. Military directives, including plans and orders, are the principal output that commanders use to communicate the decisions reached through the planning process. These military directives may be formal, informal, written, or oral, depending on the time available and the complexity of the situation. They are the linchpins connecting concepts developed in the planning process with achieving the stated objectives. A complete plan provides for common situational awareness and a point of common understanding that allows the force to influence the situation and use initiative to better react to changes that may occur during the course of operations in execution. Operational art serves as a theoretical framework that underpins the operational concept and, if properly understood, facilitates a common understanding throughout the command. This common understanding of the operational art framework allows for subordinate commanders to more clearly identify their role in the operation and to seize a fleeting opportunity as it presents itself.

1.4 NAVY PLANNING AND MISSION COMMAND

The U.S. Navy's heritage has inculcated an expectation of commanders to operate independently while following their superior commander's intent; to act when an opportunity presents itself and to feel comfortable in conditions of ambiguity. These are attributes honed by mutual trust and confidence and years of experience at sea. This description of disciplined initiative is also known as mission command in joint doctrine. While this concept may be new to other Services, it is how the Navy has historically commanded. To ensure that planning does not stifle mission command, the superior Navy commander and staff focus more on the purpose of operations rather than the details of how subordinates will execute the tasks and avoid overly restrictive command and control concepts. The commander's intent cannot be a staff product; rather it must be a true embodiment of the commander's vision and the centerpiece of the commander's discussions with subordinate commanders.

1.5 THE NAVY PLANNING PROCESS

The specific process for planning naval operations is referred to as the Navy planning process (NPP). Through the NPP, a commander can plan for, prepare, and execute operations from the operational through the tactical levels of war. Furthermore, the NPP ensures that the employment of forces is linked to objectives, and integrates naval operations with the actions of the joint force. Accordingly, the terminology, products, and concepts in the NPP are consistent with joint planning, joint doctrine, and are compatible with other Services doctrine.

The NPP is the process that assists commanders and their staffs in analyzing the operational environment (OE) and distilling a multitude of planning information in order to provide the commander with a coherent framework for determining the what and why (ends) as well as developing the method for execution (ways), given the forces and resources available (means) and the level of risk to the mission and forces. The NPP is an iterative process and is designed to gain decisions from the commander as how to proceed toward a solution. The process is thorough and helps apply clarity, sound judgment, logic, and professional expertise to identifying problems, developing solutions, and communicating directions. The NPP can be time-consuming, but through consistent use commanders and their staffs will become more proficient. Therefore, in the event experienced planners are faced with a short timeline, the NPP can easily be flexed to support crisis action planning. This concept of time-compressed planning is provided in further detail in appendix M.

¹ Operational Art is a core element in the curriculums of a variety of Navy professional development education programs in both resident and distant learning formats. See Navy Knowledge Online for enrollment instructions (<https://www.nko.navy.mil/portal/home/>).