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Presidents Forum

Arthur K. Cebrowski

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President's Forum

THE CHALLENGES I LAID OUT in my first President's Notes, in the Winter 1999 *Naval War College Review*, are still before us. I will not repeat them here. We are on the right course. Our focus remains the future—the future global environment, the future national

Vice Admiral Cebrowski has commanded Fighter Squadron 41 and Carrier Air Wing Eight, both embarked in USS *Nimitz* (CVN 68). He later commanded the assault ship USS *Guam* (LPH 9) and, during Operation DESERT STORM, the aircraft carrier USS *Midway* (CV 41). Following promotion to flag rank he became Commander, Carrier Group Six, and Commander, USS *America* Battle Group. In addition to combat deployments to Vietnam and the Persian Gulf, he has deployed in support of United Nations operations in Iraq, Somalia, and Bosnia. He has served with the U.S. Air Force; the staff of Commander in Chief, Atlantic Fleet; the staff of the Chief of Naval Operations, on four occasions; with the Joint Staff (as J6); and as Director, Navy Space, Information Warfare, and Command and Control (N6). Vice Admiral Cebrowski became the forty-seventh President of the Naval War College in July 1998.

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security environment, the future character and utility of war and military force, future opportunities, future technologies, future concepts, and the future Navy. In his address at the Current Strategy Forum here in Newport this past June, the Chief of Naval Operations said that there are four U.S. Navies: the “Navy of history,” the “Navy of today,” the “Program Navy” (that is, the Navy of the current planning process), and the “Navy after Next,” the Navy that is over the horizon. We neglect any of these at our peril; the research and courses of study here must consider all four. But *our* special operating domain is the fourth Navy—the “Navy after Next.”

The job of the Naval War College and the Navy Warfare Development Command is not just to conceptualize this future Navy but to bring it into existence. We must have a sense of urgency and a passion for this task. The nation is enjoying a window of opportunity. This window has been open for some time, yet we have seen little inclination to seize this opportunity. I fear this window will not be open much longer. The Navy of the future—indeed, the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps of the future—cannot be found on the margins of our current forces. The Cold War force structure was born of its own special circumstances in its own unique age. Much of that is behind us. We should not expect the Navy after Next to be the linear extension of those Industrial Age, Cold War forces.

Significant changes do not come easily. They are not for the faint of heart, who cling to the status quo. Such changes involve big bets. The big bets are about strategic choices—choosing a competitive space and occupying that space in dramatically different ways, ways not now envisioned. We have made such bets in the past: the transition from sail to steam, the commitment to a modern amphibious warfare doctrine in the interwar years, the introduction of naval aviation and sea-based ballistic missiles.

The temptation is to ask, “Why now?” “Why hurry?” But such questions reveal a misperception of the importance of the task and of the brittleness of the current international order. If you do not think you are ready, consider the advice of the famous warrior-sailor Admiral Arleigh Burke: *Attack!* If you are not ready—*attack!* If you need more time—*attack!* Else you will yield time and advantage to the enemy. So, we will attack. Of course, the battlespace must be prepared. Of course, the analysis and planning must proceed. But the bets must be placed now, before this historic window of opportunity

closes. We are moving deeper into the Information Age, so we must reach for Information-Age logic and rule sets; the comfortable Industrial-Age rules are no longer reliable. The Chief of Naval Operations has said, "Network-centric warfare is our organizing principle"—and so it is the organizing principle of this College. Some may say, "What if you are wrong?" "What if you are making the error of being right too soon?" These people will be paralyzed to inactivity. They will be easily found—in our wake.

I use a simple formula: Innovation equals Creativity multiplied by Implementation. To achieve innovation, we must begin by asking fundamental questions. How do we identify the new strategic choices? By what logic do we make those choices? How are they implemented? What are the big bets, and how do we make sure that we win them? That is the focus of our work for this year.

The Naval War College and the Navy Warfare Development Command have already bent to that effort. The research agenda is focused on it, and the curriculum provides opportunities for both faculty and students to participate in this vital and exciting process. Leaders in service headquarters, industry, and the Congress are watching what we do. They are prepared to push their chips out onto our number.

These are exciting times. There is no doubt that all at the Naval War College will, over this year, sense the excitement of seizing this bold, new opportunity. The twenty-first century, like the topmast of an enemy man-of-war, is on the horizon, and we are closing for battle. I sense the rush of adrenaline, but know that victory comes from finely honed skills, high-quality leadership, unit cohesiveness, and the cold calculations born of sound logic and commitment to success. Now, I invite you to join me in the arena so that, as Theodore Roosevelt would urge, your place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.



ARTHUR K. CEBROWSKI
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, Naval War College