1988

Being "Red": The Challenge of Taking the Soviet Side in Wat Games at the Naval War College

David Alan Rosenberg

Being "Red":
The Challenge of Taking the Soviet Side
in War Games at the Naval War College

David Alan Rosenberg

O ver four decades have passed since the U.S. Navy was last locked in combat at sea with a determined and capable oceangoing enemy. During those years, more than two generations of American naval technology have come and gone, as have the two generations of U.S. naval officers trained to operate and command that technology in combat. During those same four decades, the once minor Soviet Navy has emerged in both quality and quantity as a formidable seagoing force.

In the absence of actual hostilities between the United States and the U.S.S.R., an eventuality the United States has actively sought to deter, there has been no opportunity for the Navy to test its officers and its technology against the Soviet threat under wartime conditions. As the World War II reality of sustained combat at sea fades into distant memory, alternative means of measuring the U.S. Navy's strategic and tactical readiness to fight a full-scale naval war have taken on increasing importance in the development of sound American maritime strategy.

Following the approaches established in the U.S. Navy of the 1920s and 1930s, two complementary techniques for measuring strategic readiness have emerged over these past 40 years. The first of these is a massive program of both regularly scheduled and special fleet exercises involving both U.S. and allied navies. Such exercises have their antecedents in the twenty-one fleet problems conducted on a more or less annual basis by the concentrated U.S. Fleet between 1922 and 1940. As mounted today, these exercises are designed to test interoperability, tactics, and operational capability in various regions, in all types of seasons and weather, against a wide range of possible combat scenarios. More than 100 major exercises involving actual forces afloat took place in 1985 and another 90 in 1986.[1]

David Alan Rosenberg is a Naval Reserve officer assigned to the Chief of Naval Operations Intelligence Analysis 0166 Reserve unit based at Naval Air Facility, Washington, D.C. As a civilian, he is a professor in the Strategy Department at the Naval War College.

The second approach is that of war gaming. The War Gaming Department of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island has emerged as the major institution where the U.S. Navy can test its strategic concepts and tactical and operational doctrine in a dynamic atmosphere of simulated battles and campaigns. Whereas during exercises commanders are restricted from firing a shot in anger against the U.S. and allied forces simulating the enemy, at Sims Hall in Newport, a full range of ordnance may be employed through the use of computer models of combat engagements and logistics generation. Experienced and prospective naval commanders are given the opportunity to make combat decisions and observe outcomes, and subsequently review their choices, explore alternatives, analyze the results, and draw lessons from the experience.

War gaming was introduced at the Naval War College a century ago. In the fall of 1886, two years after the War College opened, Lieutenant William McCarty Little, U.S. Navy (Retired) presented a lecture on "Colomb's Naval Duel Game"—a simulation of two-ship combat. By 1894, gaming was a standard part of the course of instruction. It was conducted at three levels—single ship combat, tactical fleet formations and actions, and a strategic game simulating an entire war—as a means of teaching students to apply broad principles to specific situations. It was also useful in preparing plans and tactical formations for the fleet's annual war problem.[2]

Gaming became increasingly important in succeeding decades. In the interwar years, as the battles and campaigns of World War I were studied and the future shape of naval warfare examined, war gaming became a central element of the War College curriculum. An inexpensive (if imperfect) alternative to full-scale fleet exercises—an important consideration given 1920s economy and 1930s austerity—the games were fought with increasing frequency in Luce Hall and, after 1934, on the checkerboard floor of Pringle Hall. In 1932, a standard game schedule was established which called for 304 of the 326 days in the academic year to be devoted to tactical and strategic exercises, tactical operations and quick decisions problems, critiques of gaming experiences, and a Battle of Jutland Board Maneuver.

Gaming played an important role in shaping the Navy's strategic thinking and planning during the interwar period. While the Battle of Jutland exercise was used primarily as a training tool for gaining familiarity with gaming procedures and infusing the gamers with enthusiasm by offering the opportunity to refight the famous but inconclusive 1916 battle, the war games that pitted the U.S. Navy against the Japanese Navy, code-named "Orange," served a more specific purpose. They cast doubt on the assumption that the U.S. Navy could easily defeat the Japanese in the Pacific by virtue of numetical superiority. By the early 1930s, as intelligence improved, awareness of logistical problems increased, and the games grew more sophisticated, it became apparent that the U.S. Navy might well lose. During the rest of the

decade, war gaming helped shape U.S. naval strategy, particularly by preparing those who would become the high command, to meet the challenges that lay ahead.[3]

One important element of gaming, even during the interwar years, was intelligence. Beginning in 1929, the War College maintained an intelligence department as an integral part of its institutional structure. The actual work of the department remains something of a mystery. An examination of the college staff rosters from 1929 through Pearl Harbor reveals that at least one captain and two to five commanders or lieutenant commanders, and even an occasional Army and Marine lieutenant colonel were assigned to the department along with the college's professor of international law, G.G. Wilson, who was also on the faculty of Harvard University. Unlike the Department(s) of Operations, Strategy, and Tactics (actual departmental organization varied from year to year), which prepared the college curriculum and set the standards for gaming, the Intelligence Department appears to have been the research arm of the college, providing information on U.S. and foreign navies to support the curriculum, including gaming.

The kind and amount of information the Intelligence Department provided to students and faculty is not clear from War College archives. Three things are known, however. First, modern intelligence gathering was a factor in establishing the tactical situation for the game: mock radio intelligence intercepts were provided to "Blue" and "Orange" teams as they prepared for combat. Second, there was no dedicated "Orange" team: students played both sides of the conflict. Finally, the absence of a dedicated "Orange" team, with its own unique approach to warfighting, reflected an assumption that the opposing navies were not only similar in force structure and weapons systems, but would rely on similar tactics. The theory of naval warfare at the time centered on the decisive fleet action, primarily involving battleships in a battleline engagement. Within this context, there appeared to be only a finite number of possible permutations in tactics or variations in military philosophy.

The U.S. Navy was in fact "reading the Japanese mail" during the 1920s and 1930s through radio intelligence code breaking, and used information gleaned from broken naval codes to ascertain the size and readiness of the Japanese Fleet. The full story of that intelligence effort has yet to be declassified, much less written, but based on information that is currently available, intelligence on the Japanese tactical and operational approach to war does not appear to have been a major concern of those in the Navy's leadership who directed the collection and use of the "secrets from the ether" as such intercepts were called. It is possible that such information was collected and analyzed but was considered too sensitive for dissemination. In any event, it was not made available to either the fleet or to the War College.[4]

During the interwar years, the Naval War College was the pinnacle of the Navy's professional education. As of 7 December 1941, every active duty flag officer qualified to command at sea, save one, was a War College graduate. That leadership, shaped by a curriculum centered on war gaming, had already anticipated, through gaming experience, most of the strategic challenges that World War II in the Pacific would present. Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz' comment that the courses and war games at Newport in the 1920s were so thorough that "nothing that happened in the Pacific [during World War II] was strange or unexpected" has been widely quoted. But Nimitz was referring to overall strategy and the "fantastic logistic efforts required to support the operations of the war."[5] The inattention to enemy tactics and operational practices in the interwar war games contributed to the startling and devastating tactical surprises the Japanese were able to inflict on the U.S. Navy in a series of battles from Pearl Harbor through the Guadalcanal campaign in 1941-1943. The lesson of this experience—not to assume that an enemy's tactics and strategy will mirror one's own—was paid for dearly.

War gaming suffered something of a decline at the Naval War College after World War II. The Navy perceived its mission in the 1950s in terms of readiness to conduct forward defense, power projection ashore, and sea control—concepts that did not lend themselves readily to then existing techniques of manual war gaming. The most likely enemy of the United States—the U.S.S.R.—was not nearly so formidable a seagoing power as the Japanese had been in the interwar period. In the absence of a real naval opponent who could be cast in the "Orange" role, it was difficult to generate scenarios that were as credible or compelling as those of the 1930s. In 1958, the old game board in Pringle Hall, where warship models had been maneuvered by hand, was replaced by the Navy's first war-gaming computer, the Navy Electronic Warfare Simulator (NEWS), which had been under development since 1945. The following year a separate war gaming department was established in Sims Hall. In contrast to the interwar period, however, the NEWS was used for only 63 days of war gaming in 1965, including War College games, and Atlantic Fleet and Destroyer School training exercises.[6]

In the late 1960s, plans were laid for replacing the NEWS with a new and updated computerized war gaming center. In 1972, War College President Vice Admiral Stansfield Turner introduced a variety of reforms in the college curriculum. Among his many ideas, Turner disapproved of the way in which naval war games had been played at the college up to that time. He felt that in the past they had overemphasized the writing of complex operation orders and should be used more effectively as a teaching tool in educating students in the decisionmaking process. Turner ordered extensive modifications in the new computer equipment for this purpose. He wanted every student, not just the select few, to have the opportunity to play an admiral's role in a war game. While modifying the computer equipment for this purpose, Turner

also encouraged the development of tabletop games created by Professor Jacques Naar, the first occupant of the McCarty Little Chair of Gaming and Research Technique.

It was the emergence of the Soviet Navy as a serious oceangoing challenge, however, which was primarily responsible for a resurgence of war gaming at the Naval War College. By the mid-1970s it had become apparent that the Soviet Navy would be a formidable opponent. War gaming would be a valuable tool for testing U.S. strategy, tactics, and capabilities against this potential threat, but only if the opposition were portrayed in the games as realistically as possible. Just as detailed intelligence about Japanese capabilities had been a critical component of the interwar games, so detailed intelligence about the Soviet Union had become a critical element in the 1970s. This time, however, it was apparent that knowledge of capabilities was not enough. The Soviet approach to naval warfare was known to be fundamentally different from that of the United States. To achieve a degree of realism, it was necessary to use the best possible information on Soviet strategy, decision-making, and tactical doctrine in designing and implementing the games.

To meet this need, the Naval War College called on the Navy Field Operational Intelligence Office (NFOIO). In April 1976 the NFOIO (which became the Navy Operational Intelligence Center in 1984) sent a detachment to Newport to provide a "more comprehensive and informed intelligence input, particularly in the area of Soviet naval tactics, force structure, and capabilities." A "dedicated intelligence team," composed initially of one captain with an intelligence specialty, one commander or lieutenant commander line officer with a warfare specialty and intelligence subspecialty, one civilian intelligence analyst, and a civilian secretary, was attached to the Center for War Gaming.

Their mission, as established by an agreement between the President of the Naval War College and the Director of Naval Intelligence, was to act as "a permanent, in-residence 'Opposition Team' in appropriate war games," with responsibility for directing opposition play or supporting a designated opposition force commander. The unit would provide opposition force intelligence data for operational units played in the game; simulate play of appropriate opposition political echelons and military commands; and "provide intelligence support to the Center for War Gaming on all matters pertaining to Soviet naval operations and tactical doctrine," including all source briefings on the "capabilities, limitations, historical trends, and current developments in the Soviet Navy." In addition, the detachment would conduct independent research on the Soviet Navy, assist in the preparation of intelligence publications, and assist NFOIO in preparing tactical analyses.[7]

The establishment of the intelligence detachment at the Center for War Gaming reflected growing concern about the expansion of Soviet military

power, the same concern that prompted other U.S. intelligence innovations such as the creation of a permanent Office of Net Assessment in the Office of the Secretary of Defense during James Schlesinger's tour as Secretary of Defense from 1973 to 1975, and the 1976 Team B reassessment of National Intelligence Estimates. It was part of a broad national effort to become more vigorous and professional in assessing and confronting Soviet military capability. Not since the interwar period had the Navy treated war gaming and simulation so seriously.

The creation of a dedicated opposition team also marked an important change in the Navy's philosophy of war gaming. For one thing, it was a giant swing of the pendulum away from a long-standing institutional bias toward "mirror imaging" the enemy during war games. Equally important, it was designed to counter the kind of personal competition fostered by older approaches to war gaming. Under the old system, the games often became merely a test of skill between Navy commanders assigned to the two opposing sides. It was a personal contest between real-life competitors in which the main objective was not to play the "Red" or "Blue" side realistically or even to explore tactical and strategic lessons, but simply to beat the opposition. The question of who won and who lost overshadowed everything else. By taking the "Red" side out of the hands of the students or visiting admirals who were utilizing the war-gaming facility, the emphasis was shifted to the learning experience offered by simulated strategic interaction and tactical exchange.

By the late 1970s, war gaming at Newport had become much more than a means of training students in decisionmaking and tactics. The revised operations course created by retired Vice Admiral Thomas Weschler in 1977-1981 changed the focus of the games from the level of individual ships or small units to the fleet and task force level. The multi-week Global War Game was begun in the summer of 1979 to examine changing strategic, logistic, and tactical options for U.S. worldwide military operations. Originally intended primarily to occupy War College students who stayed in Newport over the summer break, this innovative, broad-ranging game soon took on a life of its own. In recent years, sizeable contingents of flag officers and civilian decision makers from Washington have come to Newport every summer to play in the most extensive simulation of general war staged in the United States.[8]

In 1981, the creation of the Center for Naval Warfare Studies further encouraged the shift from using war gaming primarily as a training tool toward using it for the analysis and development of strategy. The new center incorporated the old war gaming center, along with the Center for Advanced Research, the Naval War College Press, and the new Strategic Studies Group, made up of front-running Navy and Marine officers who were chosen by and reported directly to the Chief of Naval Operations. The center was to serve as a vehicle for the development and dissemination of naval strategy or, more accurately, to define the Navy's place in national strategy.

The establishment of the new center meant greater responsibilities for the NFOIO detachment. To meet the challenge, the size of the detachment was increased. As of 1984, it was composed of seven naval officers, two civilian analysts, and two enlisted personnel for office and library support. Reflecting its increased capability, the detachment was assigned the additional task of providing the director of the new Center for Naval Warfare Studies and the Strategic Studies Group with intelligence support and background information "on matters pertaining to Soviet strategy and doctrine."[9] An eighth officer was added to the now redesignated Navy Operational Intelligence Center (NAVOPINCEN) detachment in 1986.

Presenting the Soviet side in war gaming and analysis, whether for the purpose of training officers or with the intention of shaping naval and national strategy, is a large, intricate, and time-consuming task. The 1986-1987 war gaming schedule listed more than 50 separate games or exercises. In addition, gaming personnel and NAVOPINCEN detachment members participated in training sessions and seminars related to war gaming. Since completion of the new enhanced naval war gaming computer system in early 1987, it has become possible for more and more games to be played at remote sites, including fleet headquarters in Norfolk, Pearl Harbor, and even London. This will decrease the amount of travel required of fleet personnel to Newport, allowing state-of-the-art Navy war gaming to reach more commands. However, War Gaming Department and NAVOPINCEN detachment members have found that such remote gaming *increases* rather than decreases their work load because pregame preparations usually require as much, if not more, travel and advance planning as games played solely in Sims Hall.

Fewer than 40 percent of the games played at Newport are sponsored by the Naval War College, and an even smaller percentage are used purely for the instruction of War College students. The game sponsors today are active operational commanders and strategic planners in Washington. Among the game sponsors for 1986-1987 were the Commanders of the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets and U.S. Naval Forces Europe; the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic; the NATO Strike Fleet Atlantic; the Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic; the U.S. Seventh Fleet; Submarine Group Two in New London; and the Strategic Concepts Branch and the Director of Naval Warfare in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. The game sponsor sets the parameters of the simulation to be played, including the general questions that need to be explored and the range of specific tactical and strategic issues that should be included during game play. Each one of these games has a War Gaming Department staff mentor assigned to it as a scenario design representative, and a NAVOPINCEN detachment member assigned as a representative to develop ways for the opposition to be played.[10]

The NAVOPINCEN detachment's approach to playing the opposition in war games is more of an art than a science. The detachment draws heavily on

data from the Washington intelligence community, including the Navy Operational Intelligence Center in Suitland, Maryland, the rest of the Naval Intelligence Community, plus the National Security Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, and Defense Intelligence Agency. The Operational Intelligence Center provides data on current Soviet operations and exercise activity, while National Intelligence Estimates and Soviet open-source literature provide reference points for building scenarios and conducting the games. In games involving joint action, the detachment can call upon the services of two Army Fellows assigned to Newport for two-year tours to assist the War Gaming Department in getting ground operations correct. One of the Army Fellows is a military intelligence officer; the other is a combat arms professional. In addition, the NAVOPINCEN detachment regularly calls upon the U.S. Air Force "Checkmate" office and other Air Force commands for answers to questions regarding the simulation of Soviet air operations.

Before a game begins, NAVOPINCEN detachment members engage in extensive preparations. They work with the game sponsor and the War Gaming Department design representative in setting up scenarios that are realistic and yet tailored to facilitate analysis of the issues and courses of action the sponsor is concerned about testing. Opposing simulation forces are built up, computer data bases prepared, and scenarios worked and reworked to fit the requirements of the game. By the time the players arrive and the game begins, much of the work of playing or being "Red" has been completed.

It is never possible to achieve complete accuracy and fidelity in playing the opposition. War games are by their nature only approximations of combat situations. Furthermore, intelligence is never perfect, and questions inevitably arise for which there are no answers. The problem of incomplete intelligence is compounded by the pressures of game play. When the NAVOPINCEN detachment is presented with an unexpected choice, it may be possible to come up with relevant data by doing a quick search of the literature or querying intelligence community sources. Sometimes, to expedite the game, the detachment is forced to fall back on the cumulative experience of its members in making a "best military judgment" regarding likely courses of Soviet action. In such instances detachment members are nagged by the thought that the answer might have been found if only there had been time to look for it, and the choice that was made may not have been consistent with the best possible information. The professional "Red" team players find it sobering to consider that "rightly or wrongly, we are leaving high-ranking military officers with a certain perception of how Red is going to fight," although every decision is not backed by hard data.[11]

This problem is further compounded when intelligence is available but cannot be used without violating security. The NAVOPINCEN team makes use of even the most sensitive information in preparing its scenarios, but once

play begins, caution is in order since only a few of the games are classified above the "Secret" level. Detachment members will utilize their knowledge of highly classified information during game play only if this can be done without revealing the source. It may be necessary on occasion to play the Soviet side with less than total fidelity and precision in order to avoid compromising critical intelligence sources.

The NAVOPINCEN detachment also faces another more mundane, but not insignificant, constraint on how realistically it can portray Soviet forces. The U.S. side in any given game will always have the use of far more computer terminals than the Soviet side. This is a logical arrangement since U.S. choices, not Soviet ones, are the focus of the game. Nevertheless, it does mean that the detachment is not able to present the actions of Soviet forces in full detail. For example, it is particularly difficult to present Soviet air operations on a full-scale basis with this constraint. The shortage of control terminals has occasionally turned out to be a blessing in disguise. The fewer terminals "Red" has available, the fewer dedicated "Red" personnel are needed to man them. In a sense, the NAVOPINCEN detachment gamers face fewer command, control, and communication problems this way. Still, the lack of a fully staffed "Red" side means that those on the U.S. side may not have as complete a simulated picture as possible of the array of threats they would be facing in a real war.

There are also some larger questions about the design and use of the war games which are of concern to those who have served with or played against the NAVOPINCEN detachment. These are not specific constraints on how accurately the Soviets can be portrayed, but more general problems that are particularly apparent to those charged with being "Red."

First, it should be noted that not all war games are alike. Some have a comparatively narrow tactical focus, i.e., examining military issues and possible options for the use of set numbers and types of forces to resolve certain specific regional problems. Others are strategic in orientation, looking at a large number of issues over a variety of regions and with a great array of military forces. These are more scenario and personality dependent; the designers and players have greater latitude in making decisions because of the complexity inherent in large numbers of variables. Both tactical and strategic games have their uses. Tactical games are most useful in assessing, through computer modeling, the technical boundaries and general parameters of military options. Strategic games are best characterized as politico-military simulations whereby the military interaction is dependent on game-oriented political decisions rather than on more narrow technical and military considerations. They stimulate creative strategic thinking and are most useful in giving the players an opportunity to role-play decisionmaking in wartime and crisis situations.[12]

Both strategic and tactical games often begin with a scenario that is strategically realistic but politically improbable at best. This inconsistency

arises because, in order to mount a game, it is necessary to posit an outbreak of hostilities between the Soviet Union and the United States, something both nations are, in fact, anxious to avoid. Since the United States never acts as the aggressor in war games, it is often necessary to "force" the Soviet Union to engage in open hostilities without adequately explaining its reasons for doing so.

A related problem revolves around the question of the "first salvo." While the large, strategic global war games begin in peacetime or a crisis, many smaller games (particularly tactical exercises) open after war has actually started. To focus on naval engagements that permit room for American commanders to take the initiative, it is often necessary to skip over the Soviet attack that signalled the outbreak of the war and zero in on the U.S. response. The impact of the initial attack is merely written into the background scenario. It is never described as so devastating as to preclude response, since that would abort the game before it had begun. The Soviet Union, however, attaches great strategic importance to the first salvo and is likely to make it as devastating as possible. Skipping over this phase of the conflict could easily leave the wrong impression with those playing the game.

Navy and NAVOPINCEN detachment concerns about the battle of the first salvo have not been ignored at Newport. A number of specific games have been designed to focus on this phase of the conflict, and the experience gained from them has made the U.S. Navy much smarter about the first-salvo challenge and, theoretically at least, more capable of dealing with it, both in simulation and real life. Real war is always uncertain, however, and students and officers who begin play in war games without experiencing and countering the first salvo need to be constantly aware that there is another dimension to the problem that they have missed, and about which they cannot become complacent.

War games are, of course, only best approximations of operational reality. Even discounting the problem of a summary initial scenario, the time frame in which war games are played does not permit a natural unfolding of events. Most war games last only a matter of hours, days, or, at the very most, weeks. Although it is possible to telescope time to simulate a somewhat longer period, it is impossible to game a prolonged conflict realistically under these conditions. The pressure of artificial time constraints distorts the interaction between the opposing sides and may result in unrealistic decisionmaking.

Despite the best efforts of the War Gaming Department and the NAVOPINCEN detachment to make the scenarios, simulations, and inter-actions realistic, war games are competitive exercises in which the will to win is often stronger than the desire to learn. This is particularly true when those playing are knowledgeable operators who have come to Newport to test tactical concepts. They often have both a good grasp of the "Blue" side and a sophisticated understanding of the Soviet side; further, they have experience in playing war games against the NAVOPINCEN opposition

teams at the war gaming center. Reality can be sacrificed when players become too familiar with the game. Those who have had experience with how the NAVOPINCEN detachment plays the opposition can often begin to take that experience into account in making subsequent war game decisions. They will become increasingly proficient at playing the gamers, rather than the game.

This is not necessarily a negative aspect. The war gaming program at Newport is intended to give players experience in thinking about how the Soviet Union does things so that they will not be surprised in real life. To the extent that "Blue" understands what "Red" is likely to do (even if only as a result of playing the gamers, not the opposition they represent), the purpose of the gaming experience will be served. It is imperative, however, that the "Blue" gamers be aware that tactics and techniques confirmed through this sort of game play may not be so validated in a real engagement.

One important way to avoid such misplaced lessons is for "Red" to avoid playing his side of the games so consistently as to become predictable. It may be difficult to introduce inconsistency deliberately, while still being faithful to the intelligence that has been gathered and analyzed so painstakingly over time. But the realities of naval (or any other kind of) warfare make it necessary, however, to think through to the unexpected on the game floor rather than at sea. With the best recent intelligence providing a solid base on which to build, the challenge for the "Red" war gamers is to find ways of simulating not just what we think "Red" would do in the event of war, but also what "Red" *could do*. This requires additional attention to nuance and detail, as well as increased dedication to the already difficult job of thinking "Red."

Finally, it must always be remembered that war games are not surrogate history. The conflict they simulate did not actually happen. The lessons they teach are not lessons of history. Outcomes will vary even if the same game with the same scenario and the same players is repeated. Neither the scenario nor the outcome of any particular game is likely to be replicated in the real world. War gaming can be used legitimately to raise questions and identify potential problems, but beyond this it must be treated with caution. Those who cite the outcomes of war games as evidence in support of a particular theory or strategy may well be building a house on sand.

This is especially true when the conclusions (war gamers prefer the terms "insight" and "issues") being drawn from the games focus on the actions taken by the opposition. The members of the NAVOPINCEN detachment do their job well and faithfully, but they can only make educated guesses as to what the Soviet Union might or might not choose to do in combat. To conclude that the Soviet Union is likely to respond to a particular situation in a certain way because of what happened in a war game is to distort and misuse the war gaming concept.

Conclusions

During the past century, war gaming has proved itself a valuable tool in preparing officers for combat and strategic decisionmaking. Although students at the Naval War College have less exposure to war gaming today than they did in the interwar period, it is likely to remain an important element in the curriculum.

The need for accurate intelligence about probable opponents has been recognized as a critical element of war gaming since the interwar period. The naval intelligence community currently plays a crucial role in war gaming at the Naval War College, providing systematic, detailed information about Soviet forces and doctrine during both the design and the implementation of the games, and seeking to "think Red" in order to give players a consistent, credible opponent.

Despite the constraints they face, the officers and analysts of the NAVOPINCEN detachment have every reason to be proud of their record. By playing a credible Soviet opponent, they have injected a measure of realism into war games that otherwise might be exercises in mirror imaging or even wishful thinking. Their professionalism generates the kind of challenge against which those engaged in war gaming can truly test their skills and their strategies.

Nevertheless, the current popularity of war gaming raises questions that deserve careful consideration. If war games are not surrogate history, just what role can and should they play in the development of strategy? To a large extent it comes down to the experience of each individual in the game. Just as in strategic planning, where it is not the plan but the planner who is important for the future, so too in war gaming, it is the gamer not the game. To the extent that individuals expand and test their minds in playing against a credible opposition and use that experience to inform (but not dictate) their actions and plans, the investment made in manpower, hardware, and money at Sims Hall at the Naval War College will continue to be a sound one.

Notes

1. On current exercises, see Christopher C. Wright, "U.S. Naval Operations in 1985," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings, Naval Review*, May 1986, pp. 34–40ff; and "U.S. Naval Operations in 1986," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings, Naval Review*, May 1987, pp. 30–43ff. Interwar fleet problems are documented in the National Archives and Records Service microfilm publication M496, *U.S. Fleet Problems, 1922-1941*; their importance is discussed most recently in Thomas C. Hone and Mark David Mandeles, "Managerial Style of the Interwar Navy: A Reappraisal," *Naval War College Review*, September-October 1980, pp. 88-101.

2. John B. Hattendorf et al., *Sailors and Scholars: The Centennial History of the U.S. Naval War College* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 1984), pp. 24–25, 40–41; see also Francis J. McHugh, *Fundamentals of Naval War Gaming* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College, 1966), chap. 2.

3. Hattendorf et al., pp. 137-161; Michael Vlahos, *The Blue Sword: The Naval War College and the American Mission, 1919-1941* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College Press, 1980), pp. 131-156; see also Michael Vlahos, "Wargaming, an Enforcer of Strategic Realism, 1919-1942," *Naval War College Review*, March-April 1986, pp. 7-22; and Edward Miller's forthcoming study of War Plan Orange for the Naval Institute Press.

4. The evolution of organization and personnel of the intelligence department is documented in U.S. Naval War College, *Register of Officers, 1884-1977*, Naval War College Archives, Newport, R.I., pp. 37-62; on radio intelligence code breaking and the work of the Office of Naval Intelligence in the interwar period, see the declassified Top Secret Ultra history by Laurence Safford, "A Brief History of Communications Intelligence in the United States," SRH 149, Record Group 457, Modern Military Headquarters Branch, National Archives, Washington, D.C. This 22-page paper contains more detail on what was being read, when, and how it was used before World War II than any published source. On using simulated radio intercept messages, see Vlahos, *The Blue Sword*, pp. 136-139. The failure to consider Japanese tactics and training in war games is discussed by T.J. McKearney, "The Solomons Naval Campaign: A Paradigm for Surface Warships in Maritime Strategy," Unpublished Student Research Paper, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, Calif.: September 1985, pp. 105-138.

5. E.B. Potter, *Nimitz* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1976), p. 136, contains the quote from Nimitz' letter to Vice Admiral Charles Melson. The quote also hangs in the lobby of the Naval War College War Gaming Center at Sims Hall.

6. Hattendorf et al., pp. 237-238; on NEWS, see McHugh, chap. 5.

7. Memorandum of Understanding between Rear Admiral B.R. Inman, U.S. Navy, Director of Naval Intelligence, and Vice Admiral J.J. LeBourgeois, U.S. Navy, President, Naval War College, Subject: NAVINTCOM Element at War Gaming Center, April 1976, from the files of the NAVOPINCEN Detachment, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.; on the Turner reforms, see Hattendorf et al., chap. 11, especially pp. 286-287.

8. Hattendorf et al., pp. 312-315.

9. Revised Memorandum of Understanding, Subject: Naval Intelligence Support to the Center for Naval Warfare Studies, 1 November 1982, NAVOPINCEN Detachment files, Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

10. Naval War College War Gaming Department, Operations Division, War Gaming Schedule Update, 1986-1987, 15 August 1986.

11. Robert Marshall, "Thinking Red Wargaming: Naval Issues," unclassified brief prepared for a 1985 National Defense University War Gaming Center Conference, copy courtesy Commander Marshall.

12. For a general discussion of contemporary war gaming, its varieties, and its usefulness to planners and policymakers, see the forum on "Political and Military Gaming" with articles by Lincoln Bloomfield, Paul Bracken, Garry D. Brewer, and Lloyd H. Hoffman, Jr., in *ORBIS*, Winter 1984, pp. 783-822. Hoffman's article on "Defense War Gaming," pp. 812-822, surveys the various U.S. Government gaming organizations and types of games played.

ψ