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## President's Notes

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## PRESIDENT'S NOTES

It has been interesting to note, in these troubled times, the reemergence of history as a topical theme in Op Ed pieces and articles in any number of newspapers and journals.

Before coming to the Naval War College, I had heard some criticism of the curriculum's emphasis on the lessons of history to the neglect of preparation for the present. I have found, however, that a judicious balance has been struck between these requisites and I believe that the former must nourish the latter. In the aftermath of World War II the Harvard Report, *General Education in a Free Society*, wisely stated that "One of the aims of education is to break the strong hold on the present."

This is a good time, in the midst of a bad time, for some careful introspection. How often have the exigencies of the moment driven us away from the broader objectives of the future? Or, how often have we failed to look back to see if someone has not indeed been there before? How far back in history should we look? If one wishes, one can walk the cat back over 2000 years to Demosthenes who said: "Courage and boldness of speech, unless they have material force at command, lead to peril in action." For many of us who have passed the half century mark, however, our own lifetime can be instructive.

How much can we learn about the need for maritime strength from the events of the 1930s and the 1940s?

The focus at the Naval War College, particularly in the Strategy and Policy Course, is not on history as a sterile academic discipline but rather on its recurring themes and the problems that have continually taxed the genius of statesmen and soldiers. Similarly, the Naval Operations Course, through case studies, emphasizes those enduring principles of war that obtain today.

The recurring themes, illustrated by case studies ranging from the classic prototype of Athens and Sparta (which has a great deal of relevance in today's world) through the Napoleonic Wars, Strategic Theory, a century of Europe and the Balance of Power, the lessons of World War I, the Road to War 1919-1941, World War II, the events of the Cold War to Contemporary Policy and Strategy, are constants:

- Military force as an instrument of national policy; the relationship of national interests, national policies, war aims and military strategies; war as an extension of policy by other means; military force as deterrence.

- Imbalances between political ends and military means, overcommitment

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and undercommitment, false expectations of success or failure.

- Nonmilitary instruments of national policy: diplomacy, appeasement, arms control, crisis-management.

- The international environment: the state system, balance of power, multipolarity and bipolarity, collective security.

- Alliances in peace and war: allies as assets, allies as liabilities, coalition strategies.

- Constraints on the use of force: international law and custom, "world opinion," influence of neutral nations, countervailing force, Clausewitzian "friction."

- Domestic influence on policy and strategy: societal, governmental, and ideological influences; the role of public opinion.

- Civil-military relations: historic and contemporary models for coordinating the roles of political and military leaders.

- Strategic theories: classical and contemporary, continental and maritime, conventional and nuclear.

- The role of sea power: utility and use of naval forces, past and present;

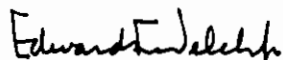
interdependence of sea, land, and air power.

- Strategy and technological change: problems of adapting strategies to fit changing technology.

- The effect of history on strategy and policy: lessons of the past, historical analogies, continuity and change.

No one questions the need for the Navy to encourage its officers to have the vision to plan and anticipate and keep pace of technological advances. It is equally important, however, for them to look behind and see where they've been and how they got there. The study of history is more important than the bounds of a single academic discipline would suggest. History is the central discipline for understanding our Western values and traditions. As George Santayana observed somewhat ominously, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

I am hopeful that this awakened interest in a very practical and useful discipline will have some lasting effects. Meanwhile, students at the Naval War College will continue to study the past so that they may serve well in the future.



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