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## President's Forum

Jeffrey A. Harley

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## PRESIDENT'S FORUM

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### *Meeting Operational Needs*

IN MY FORUM in the Autumn 2016 issue of the *Review* I highlighted a three-pronged agenda for the coming years, designed to focus our collective efforts to operationalize, navalize, and futurize the College's endeavors. In the paragraphs that follow, I'd like to address several initiatives that are helping us to be of more value to the operating forces.

The Naval War College (NWC) plays a key role in helping our military and civilian leaders make informed decisions about issues of global importance. Since good decisions must be based on accurate knowledge and reasonable assumptions, we have expanded and reenergized the important work of our highly regarded China Maritime Studies Institute, and launched a new academic and research center with a focus on Russia's ongoing advances in its maritime forces.

In the late summer of 2015, as civil war raged in Syria and President Bashar al-Assad's government crumbled, Russian military forces began arriving in the region in an effort to stabilize the regime and roll back the opposition. Among the combat platforms sent to Syria were warships from Russia's Black Sea Fleet, which took up station in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and have remained there since. That October, Russian Buyan-M missile corvettes from the Caspian Flotilla fired advanced Kalibr cruise missiles to strike targets in Syria from over nine hundred miles away. Since then, Russian navy vessels have been key enablers of Russia's intervention in the Syrian civil war. These are dramatic advances for a navy that, fifteen years earlier, could muster barely a week of at-sea duty time for its individual surface ships.

The Syria deployment is emblematic of Russia's return to the sea. The last decade has seen Russia surmount many of its post-Cold War challenges and reassert itself in regions it considers strategically vital, including the Black Sea,

the Baltic Sea, the eastern Mediterranean, and the Arctic. To better understand and evaluate the implications of Russia's return to the sea, NWC established the Russia Maritime Studies Institute (RMSI) in August 2016.

RMSI's mission is to conduct research into a range of Russian maritime issues. These include Russian naval developments, but RMSI's analytical scope also encompasses shipbuilding, maritime law, energy issues, and technological development, among other topics. It is a truly collaborative enterprise, drawing on expertise from across the College to execute a research agenda that is responsive to the needs of our Navy.

RMSI's faculty members have been very busy in the institute's short existence. In addition to initiating a handful of research projects, they have traveled to U.S. Naval Forces Europe and Sixth Fleet headquarters, where they met with fleet leadership, supported staff planning efforts, and provided a series of educational briefings to the staff. RMSI faculty also traveled to the headquarters of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, where they provided leadership with an overview of Russian maritime issues and consulted with planners.

There is still much to be done as RMSI gets its sea legs. In the next year, there will be staff to hire, research to complete, and relationships to build. While the institute's operating bandwidth is currently limited, my intention is to grow RMSI into a world-class research institute that puts the best traditions of scholarly research at the service of the Navy.

As another way we can deliver value to the fleet, we are taking steps to ensure that we are providing the best possible gaming and analysis support to our operating forces. In his "Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority," the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) charged the Navy with testing and refining naval power concepts "through focused wargaming, modeling, and simulations" that will connect directly to fleet exercises and training. Implicit in this charge is the challenge that operations research and analysis across the Navy enterprise must be conducted in a cohesive or holistic manner that is sufficient for USN leadership to make fully informed decisions. To that end, the College is committed to increasing the connections among experimentation, campaign analysis, and war gaming.

In November 2016, we hosted a Navy Operations Research and Analysis Workshop in Newport as a forum for leaders from across the Navy enterprise to share existing gaming, experimentation, and analytical processes so as to identify beneficial connections and opportunities to provide better analytical products for Navy decision makers. Representatives from OPNAV N3/5, N81, U.S. Fleet Forces Command, the Naval Postgraduate School, the Navy Warfare Development Command, and the Naval War College participated in the two-day event. Attendees presented their current processes for conducting, integrating, and

disseminating research results. This was followed by a structured discussion to capture the key elements, both formal and informal, that connect those processes and results across the spectrum of Navy operations and research. We expect that the postworkshop report will be a comprehensive integration map that includes recommendations for ways in which the Navy enterprise can be linked more effectively to provide innovative support for the CNO's goal of strengthening naval power at and from the sea. We anticipate that this event will be just the first step in helping all our institutions and organizations keep connected, with the result being increased impact from research, gaming, and experimentation that will keep our maritime forces ahead of the curve.

The Naval War College remains committed to aggressively delivering products and concepts that will help ensure the nation's continued maritime superiority. Watch this space for future updates!

JEFFREY A. HARLEY

*Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy*

*President, U.S. Naval War College*