

1994

President's Notes

Joseph C. Strasser
U.S. Navy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Strasser, Joseph C. (1994) "President's Notes," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 47 : No. 4 , Article 2.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol47/iss4/2>

This President's Forum is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

“In a world in which societies are becoming ever more interdependent but in which political power remains fragmented, whatever security or civility prevails may well depend on the character, the policies, the strength, and the will of a few great states, and the leadership for those states must come from this country.”



President's Notes

IN VARIOUS FORMS, the Secretary of the Navy's Current Strategy Forum has been an annual event at the Naval War College ever since 1949. In many respects, its inception was occasioned by the conclusion of the successful struggle with the Axis powers and the need to understand the dimensions of, and the

Admiral Strasser holds a B.S. from the Naval Academy, two master's degrees from The Fletcher School, Tufts University, and from the same school a Ph.D. in political science. He graduated from the command and staff course at the Naval War College in 1972. He commanded the USS *O'Callahan* (FF 1051), Destroyer Squadron 35, Cruiser-Destroyer Group Three, and Battle Group Foxtrot. His seven years in Washington included two years in the office of the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Adapted from remarks delivered at the 1994 Current Strategy Forum, 14–16 June 1994, at the Naval War College.

6 Naval War College Review

appropriate response to, threats and opportunities arising from the ashes of that conflict. In 1949 those who gathered in Newport reflected on the hopes and fears of a nation thrust as never before into global leadership. They labored to discern the ageless and the changing features of the emerging world. Above all, they sought to understand how the generation of Americans which was heir to the mixed legacy of depression and world war might shape the future. They probably understood, as Samuel Johnson expressed it, that "the future is purchased by the present."

As we convene another Current Strategy Forum, we are in a situation remarkably comparable to those earlier years. With almost breathtaking speed the great twilight struggle of the Cold War has come to an end and with it the disintegration of the last great European empire. Ancient antagonisms once thought transformed by the events of recent history are reemerging, new hopes are kindled, and messianic dreams are moving masses once thought inert. Permanent peace remains an aspiration, but all around the world many peoples find themselves, in Milton's words, "in worst extremities, and on the perilous edge of battle." What then in this new "postwar" period constitutes the requisites of national security and the objects of military power? What will be the role of naval power in securing a just and durable international order? And what will be the vocation of the United States in that order?

The historian John Lewis Gaddis, a former member of this faculty, entitled his recent study of the Cold War *The Long Peace*—a suggestive title for a period that we generally characterize as war, albeit cold. He posits that historians yet unborn would look at the forty-five years after the Second World War as an era of statecraft at least the equal of that of the ages of Metternich and of Bismarck—a period in which creative statecraft so engineered alliances and understandings and so balanced antagonisms as not only to prevent a general war but to provide an environment in which economies would prosper and democratic institutions develop. The forces that landed on Normandy's beaches fifty years ago signalled not only the overthrow of a particularly wicked oppression but the development of practices and institutions that would both secure the West and provide a peaceful and prosperous harbinger for the entire world. Whether or not future historians will make this judgment, however, will depend on the wisdom and energy, the devotion and sacrifices, of the new leadership that has inherited the hard-won victories of the hot and cold warriors.

Winston Churchill, in the prefatory page of the last volume of his magisterial study of World War II, wrote, "How the Great Democracies Triumphed, and so Were able to Resume the Follies Which Had so Nearly Cost Them Their Life." Whether or not the peoples and leaders of what we came to call the "free world" in fact largely avoided those follies is still left to the assessment of history not written. But I would suggest, as a preliminary reflection, that the evidence

indicates that they acquitted themselves very well indeed. Follies did occur, but the ultimate folly of renewed depression and general war was avoided. Structures of balance, of order, of economic growth, of humane values were created, deepened, and extended: the alphabet soup of the post-World War Two era summons up those structures—NATO, OECD, GATT, IMF, EC, UN. The list goes on. The fundamental issue of our time and of this Forum is what we shall do with the world we have inherited. And, like those participants in the 1949 forum, we cannot wait for the dust to settle, we are unable to delay until a clearer view of the future emerges.

It has been said that we are in a transitional period. Although this observation seems sensible, it is also not very helpful, not least because you never know what you're transiting and often where you're going until after you arrive. It has been reported that, as Adam and Eve were being driven out of the Garden of Eden, Adam remarked to Eve, "Dear, I think we're about to go through a transition." Transition or not, the odyssey upon which the United States and our friends and allies are embarked will raise certain fundamental questions and suggest answers, probably both hackneyed and sublime.

The past hundred years have seen the emergence of the United States as a great power and its rejection of the nineteenth century policy of nonalignment. Many still living have witnessed two world wars and a titanic struggle between the two superpowers that emerged from the ashes of those wars. Ancient empires have fallen and new nations have arisen. Worldwide depression has leveled economies, and the greatest economic growth in world history has raised per capita income to unparalleled heights. Populations have exploded, and migrations have spilled over political borders. Famine has spread even as agricultural production has expanded beyond imagining. The world of 1994 seems both heir to and far distant from that of 1894. So, too, the American people are both intimately connected to and separated from the founding and pioneering generations. In considering our future agenda as a nation, is it any wonder that we are at one and the same time in a reflective and a cranky mood? We are seeking simultaneously to grasp the nature of the world that has arisen from the struggles of this century, the requirements for our welfare and security as a people, and the policies and strategies that will guarantee our commonwealth. Transcending partisanship, we are forced to admit that the demands of leadership today can be heavy and that the exigencies of followership are not fully appreciated.

One thing, however, is certain. In a world in which societies are becoming ever more interdependent but in which political power remains fragmented, whatever security or civility prevails may well depend on the character, the policies, the strength, and the will of a few great states, and the leadership for those states must come from this country. If those states endowed with relative

8 Naval War College Review

territorial security, political stability, humane institutions, and great wealth retreat into self-absorbing parochialism, violence will become the norm, first at the periphery of the international order and finally in the very core of that order.

Myres McDougal, Sterling Professor of Law at Yale University, argued during the years of the Cold War that one of the key objects of American foreign policy must be the development of norms and practices that favor some "minimum world public order." Key to this concept was the control of unauthorized coercion across state lines and the distinction between permissible and impermissible coercion, that is, between self defense or police action and aggression. Minimizing coercion was, in Professor McDougal's mind, central to maximizing human dignity. Today we see the threat and use of coercion both across national boundaries, as in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and in the brutal and even genocidal force employed within recognized borders. Human dignity has indeed suffered in unspeakable ways. Moreover, grotesque crimes against humanity which once could be cloaked in ignorance are now daily displayed across the electronic airwaves. Neither U.S. power nor the authority of the organized international community is sufficient to halt all such aggression and such depravities. Yet, utterly unrestrained defiance of international standards of conduct related to the use of force can only create such an atmosphere of insecurity and cynicism as to impede and perhaps at last cripple normal economic commerce and civilized social intercourse.

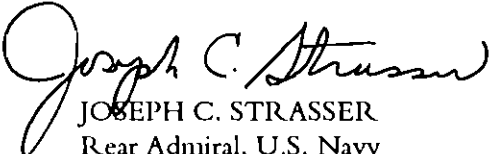
One other thing is apparent: naval power and military force will still define much of the currency of international order. Just because a nation grows and diversifies economically, it is not relieved of the need to maintain public order through law enforcement. So in the international realm, the strength and visibility of American military power, as well as the wisdom and will of those who may wield it, will give heart to those who would minimize coercion and maximize peaceful change—and would make them willing to assume the risks and costs necessary to join with us, where necessary, to meet aggression.

Moreover, our reassuring presence and our early response to international crises will depend on the deployments and endurance around the globe of our naval forces and indeed all of our military forces. They represent the full panoply of American power and the evidence of U.S. engagement. They provide much of the framework of U.S. cooperation with potential allies and enable American might to be felt where, in the words of Washington, our "interest, guided by justice," shall determine.

This is our agenda for the future. I hope that our deliberations will have at least clarified that agenda and kindled within us the spirit of innovation whereby we may join with others to encourage and to build the new postwar world. The peacemakers are still blessed—because not only of the intent of their hearts but the energy of their minds and the firmness of their will. As the generation after

World War II worked boldly to remove the menace to both peace and justice, may we so strive as we meet the new challenges and opportunities of another hard peace. If this Forum contributes to that understanding, I can say that we will have succeeded indeed.

The ancient Greeks believed that the owl of Minerva, the symbol of wisdom and understanding, was only visible at dusk. In the heat of the day and in the glare of sunshine, action is normally characterized by fragmentary understanding and too little wisdom. I think this is an elegant way of saying that we get smart too old. The life of nations and the quality of civilization, however, force us, even in the midst of action, to continue the quest to deepen our understanding and seek wisdom. Over the past year the officers who have attended the Naval War College have been summoned to this reflection. Now we ask all of you who have come to Newport to join us in that reflection, so that when we all return to the field of battle, whether it be the battle of war or of peace, we do so forearmed with something of the spirit of that owl of Minerva.


JOSEPH C. STRASSER
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy
President, Naval War College



Winners of the Hugh G. Nott Prize for 1993

The President of the Naval War College has announced the winners of prizes for the finest articles (less those on historical subjects) appearing in the *Naval War College Review* in 1993:

- First Prize (\$500), Lieutenant Commander Bruce A. Ross, U.S. Navy, for “The Case for Targeting Leadership in War” (Winter);
- Second Prize (\$300), Sergei Fedorenko, of Salve Regina College, for “Russia and Arms Control: The Trials of Transition to a Post-Soviet Era” (Spring); and,
- Third Prize (\$200), Lieutenant Colonel Kevin J. Kennedy, U.S. Air Force, for “Stealth: A Revolutionary Change in Air Warfare” (Spring).

This award is given in memory of the late Captain Hugh G. Nott, U.S. Navy, who made major contributions over a period of ten years to the professional life of the Naval War College.

Winners of the Edward S. Miller History Prize for 1993

Through the generosity of the distinguished historian Edward S. Miller, the President of the Naval War College has awarded prizes to authors of the finest articles on historical subjects appearing in the *Naval War College Review* in 1993.

The winner (\$700) is Professor Sadao Asada, of Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, for “The Revolt against the Washington Treaty: The Imperial Japanese Navy and Naval Limitations, 1921–1927” (Summer).

The runner-up (\$300) is Professor William C. Green, of Boston University, for “The Historical Russian Drive for a Warm Water Port: Anatomy of a Geopolitical Myth” (Spring).

Ψ

These awards are made with the support of the Naval War College Foundation, a private non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of the educational resources of the Naval War College in areas where government funds are not available.