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## President's Notes

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## President's Notes

**T**HE QUALITIES OF THOUGHT and expression hold fast together. Our world over the last fifty years has been plagued not only by some foolish and evil ideas but by the degradation of language expressed in jargon, obscure formulas, verbosity, and inexactness. But if this has been a salient feature of the general intellectual landscape, there has been one warrior against both bad thinking and bad writing, and that is Frank Uhlig, who retires this fall as Editor of the Naval War College Press (though he will remain a part of the larger College community). Frank was enticed to leave the U.S. Naval Institute in 1981, at a time when the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Thomas B. Hayward, and the Under Secretary of the Navy, Robert J. Murray, were seeking to revitalize strategic thinking in the naval services and to develop a shared intellectual framework within which officers could address key issues of strategy and operations. The result was the reorganization of research and gaming at the War College into a single Center for Naval Warfare Studies (CNWS), which

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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.

would, among other tasks, exert influence through coherent expression and a vehicle for propagation. Frank Uhlig has been central to this enterprise.

He arrived in Newport well equipped for the task. In addition to naval interest documented as far back as age twelve, and two years of active naval service, he brought to the College nearly thirty years of publishing experience. Twenty of them were at the U.S. Naval Institute, where he had created and edited the *Naval Review*, visited U.S. Navy units around the world, most memorably in Vietnam, and won the Navy League's Alfred Thayer Mahan Award for Literary Achievement.

His edited collection entitled *Vietnam: The Naval Story* appeared in 1986, and a new book, *How Navies Fight*, is now forthcoming from the Naval Institute. But his editorial duties have come first. With this issue, he has published sixty-two numbers of the *Naval War College Review*. Fourteen books have appeared in Frank's time under the Naval War College Press imprint—five of them, plus four "Newport Papers," edited in the Press offices.

In his editorial leadership, Frank has reflected deeply, probed incessantly, and written clearly about the nature of sea power and the role of naval forces. But he has been no armchair admiral or detached intellectual; rather, he has made a concrete contribution to naval thinking. Along with publications and participation in symposia and war games, his instrument has been his large professional correspondence: a sustained conversation with a surprising number of authors and other scholars, officers, and distinguished figures in and out of the College. In it he has encouraged promising ideas, challenged sloppy thinking, and stimulated concise and precise writing: "You can't think effectively in ignorance," he opined. "Writing is the most easily judged evidence of thought."

Here (with Frank's permission) are some samples of that correspondence. One frequent subject was his years-long inductive search (i.e., from historical examples) for a general theory of the actual uses of navies. At length there appeared in his letters what would become the thesis of his new book: "Here are what seem to me the main purposes of a navy at war: (a) to make sure friendly shipping can flow; (b) to make sure enemy shipping cannot flow. Those are absolutes. There is also a conditional purpose, conditional upon having reasonable assurance that one's own shipping can flow: (c) to land armies on hostile shores, supporting them then and thereafter with fire and logistics."

His historical researches have also resulted in a renewed appreciation for the contributions of Alfred Thayer Mahan and other naval theoreticians. "We hear the term 'Mahanian Strategy' a lot. One assumes that in such a strategy one belligerent, if not both, seeks out a great sea battle in which the foe's fleet is to be annihilated. . . . It is all very blue-water and offensive. But is that what Mahan said? . . . The great quote . . . 'Those far-distant, storm-beaten ships . . .' doesn't sound offensive, it sounds defensive. And it also seems, in essence, to be, in Admiral Gorshkov's words, a matter of 'fleet against the shore.' A second

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fragment is Mahan's likening of the sea to 'a great common.' . . . Friendly commerce-bearing ships upon that common must be protected from predators, and hostile commerce-bearers must be driven off it. That is both offensive and defensive. . . . So, is what we call 'Mahanian' really Mahanian, or is it a corruption foisted upon us?"

A related interest has been the "operational level" of war. A Second World War reference: "Strategically, the seizure of Guadalcanal was defensive, operationally it was offensive. The eventual success of the venture at Guadalcanal permitted the U.S. to go on the offensive in the South Pacific both strategically and operationally. The strategic aim was first the capture of Rabaul and, later, the neutralization of that place. The operational aim, in support of the strategy, was to seize air bases on Munda and Bougainville. And so as the war went on and reality changed, strategy changed too in order to match reality. Operations supported strategy and tactics supported operations."

Frank can be relied upon to be able to put contemporary events into historical perspective. "The 'maritime strategy' . . . can be seen as a codification of what we would hope to do if war were to break out between Nato and the Soviet Union. . . . To discuss our subject usefully we have to use examples from real life. In 1941 the Orange Plan . . . gave way to the realities of war. Once war began in the Pacific, the 'strategy' to relieve the Philippines was shown to be a fantasy, even if, before December 7, it was a political necessity. Under intense Japanese pressure, the fantasy was replaced by (a) another, the forlorn hope of holding the 'Malay Barrier,' and (b) the realistic effort to hold key points in the Pacific. . . ."

However, naval thought and debate, in the abstract and in print, is his most frequent subject. ". . . So long as we do not try to turn our instruments of naval war, or the strategies and tactics by which we attempt to use them, into . . . dogmas, to be attacked by the infidels and defended by the true believers, we will probably find sea power useful and perhaps indispensable next time we get into a big contest." Indeed, "if the pulse of the naval debate is weak, regardless of its budget the Service will be weak. If the pulse of naval debate is strong, the Service will be strong."

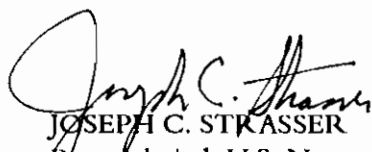
His letters reflect a sensitivity to clear (or muddled) thought processes. "You told us about the advantages the Americans had over the Japanese in the way of intelligence. Yet, was it always so? . . . In contrast, the Japanese seem to have anticipated our strikes at Truk and Palau early in 1944 and our attack upon Leyte in October that year. How did they find out? Or did they just think very well?" Or, concerning one year's Global War Game play: "Blue has scattered his 14 big carriers all over the world. . . . How does Blue expect ever to get a mass of carriers large enough to succeed in a place important enough to matter?"

The purposes, direction, and appearance of the *Naval War College Review* are a continual subject of his correspondence. "It is the nature of the contents which

makes a journal useful or not useful. I have been trying [1983] to change that, too. I am anxious to publish more officers' work, especially naval officers' work. I am anxious to publish more on what clearly are naval subjects. . . ." The difficult transition from good thinking to equally good writing is a related concern. "Writing is . . . one of the strongest instruments available for the disciplining of our thoughts—especially when it is published for other people's eyes." Many a writer prepared to reflect, reflect, reflect, and edit, edit, and edit again has known Frank's guidance—only laziness arouses his anger, whether it be intellectual lassitude or sloppy craftsmanship. "As I read the original it became clear that there were some lazy words competing with the hard workers for the readers' scarce time and mental energy. I have attempted to obliterate the lazy ones." Or, ". . . The paper is 'too dense.' Indeed, I am reminded of the recipe for success offered by Ed [Edward H.] Heinemann, the great aircraft designer: 'Simplify and add lightness.'"

"Now," as Frank recently wrote a colleague, "as the likelihood of major war between our country and the other great power recedes, or appears to recede, the difficulty of nurturing serious military thought may well become more intense. Given all these conditions how do we ensure that, if a great war or even a modest-sized one were to arise, we would have sufficient officers able to perform at the highest levels of command and staff as effectively as their forebears did nearly half a century ago? That, it seems to me, is one of the great tasks facing the Navy and its war college now and in the foreseeable future."

I am pleased that Frank Uhlig is not going far, and his contributions will continue in that same foreseeable future. We at the College feel most fortunate to have had an individual of Frank's integrity, intellectual prowess, and dedication here for some twelve years. The naval services, the defense community, and consequently the nation are better for having undergone his tutorial.



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

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY BUREAU OF SIGNALS U. S. N. 10		U. S. NAVAL RADIO SERVICE					
RECEIVED OR FILED AT STATION		OR U. S. S. WILHELMINA		BY OPERATOR		DATE NOV. 11, 1918	TIME 1120 A.
PREFIX	ORIGIN	NO.	ENCL.	RECD.	CHECK	FILING DATE	
NAVY	British Wireless			L.S. Roe	GOVT.		
VIA							
GOVT. Press To All Stations For Publication London, November 11, 1918							
At ten twenty Monday morning Prime Minister made the following announcement:- "The armistice was signed at five this morning and hostilities are to cease on all fronts at eleven this morning".							
The above message was received while we were lying in the harbor at Brest, France.							
<u>Communication Officers</u>							
D.W. Ladd		H.L. Sweetser		F.R. Uhlig			
<u>Radio Force</u>							
R.E. Cunningham, Chief		L.S. Scott		3rd C.			
G.P. Murray 1st C.		F. Redford		3rd C.			
L.S. Roe 2nd C.		J.J. Smith		3rd C.			
R. J. Driscoll 2nd C.		D. Redford		3rd C.			
FORWARDED TO	VIA		DATE	TIME	M. FILING DATE		
PREFIX	ORIGIN	NO.	OPERATOR	CHECK	FILING DATE		
NAVY							
THIS MESSAGE IS NOT TO BE USED FOR COMMERCIAL PURPOSES. IT IS THE PROPERTY OF THE U.S. NAVAL RADIO SERVICE AND IS TO BE KEPT SECRET.							

"War Termination," seventy-five years ago this fall

