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## President Notes

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## President's Notes

**T**he confluence of events at the Naval War College has raised anew questions about our purposes and programs. As this is written, we are developing our logic for the impending Congressional field hearing at the College by a committee chaired by Congressman Ike Skelton of Missouri. This Committee will ask us to explain our plans to meet the requirements of the Goldwater-Nichols legislation for increased "jointness." In addition, we have every reason to expect that the Chairman of the Committee will ask us whether or not the War College is developing strategists. The Congressman has delivered five speeches on strategy from the floor of the House of Representatives. In several of these speeches, he has found fault with the Services' development of strategists. The structure of military education has, in the minds of several Congressmen, become the link between increased jointness and the development of strategists.

The Navy has had to defend at regular periods its interest in and point of view on the education of officers, and I have occasionally had to defend within the Navy my own avocational interest in education. Occasionally I have responded that one seeks knowledge in pursuit of virtue. The next question is about virtue. The concept of virtue is as old as the ideal of education. The ancient Greek philosophers saw virtue as properly and completely fulfilling one's nature and function. The Renaissance philosophers saw virtue as the perfection of those attributes needed to execute successfully one's role, whether it be as citizen, statesman—or naval

officer. So I have taken virtue to be the goal of trying to do things right. At a minimum, trying to do things right means that one has to think for himself and develop a position. I have argued that there is no better goal for the education of an officer than virtue—thinking and developing a position in pursuit of doing things right—because it relates to whatever responsibility he may carry. Furthermore, progress toward this goal tends to cause him to be independent in a positive way and at the same time secure the objects of his military community and the nation. I hold these qualities to be good for naval officers and the Naval Service.

In the Navy, we have little time in an officer's career to pursue such goals through education. Consequently, we must maintain high standards and use our time well at a place such as the Naval War College.

Translated into better qualities of jointness, these goals, as I have defined them, mean that our officers are likely to become more joint because we have them think through how we are structured to fight. We fight by means of joint operations. These goals do not mean that our officers leave behind the subculture of their naval experience. Rather the parochialism of the experience must recede where jointness begins.

The intellectual patterns of a budding strategist are similar. If strategy is where his intellectual curiosity takes him—or where he may be called to serve—then he would be thinking toward developing positions in pursuit of doing strategy right. If our educational standards take hold in this officer, then, in my judgment, our officer begins to subject his own thought processes to scrutiny and to identify the most fruitful strategic questions and approaches. I do not believe, therefore, that the patterns we try to instill can be limited to narrow specialization but will appeal to the full range of the officer's intellect.

Another Congressman speaking to our students from the stage of Spruance Hall has said that the Navy has a much stronger subculture than the other Services. He humorously revealed some of his fascination with the phenomenon and his intent to study it further. Sometime after that speech here, I read a column by a retired military officer in which he alleged to know the crucial content of this Navy subculture. To explain himself, he focused on an acronym from naval communications, "unodir," which means "unless otherwise directed." He claimed that "unodir" was the sorrowful symptom of excessive independence among naval officers and evidence of a lack of team spirit. On the contrary, "unodir" springs from the experience of being at the forward edge alone, on a moving naval platform. After thinking it through, the commanding officer has a position on what is expected of him. He cannot postpone execution because of possible vagaries in communication.

The point in touching on the speech and the column in connection with education is to imply certain characteristics and experiences of our naval

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students: technical competence without which you dare not get underway; separation at sea from more senior authority; and, dependence on self twenty-four hours per day while commanding a maneuverable technological marvel like an aircraft carrier or a nuclear submarine which may be on the lonely forward edge. And, regarding our junior students who have not had command, they are learning the competence for which they may be judged qualified for command.

What we get at the Naval War College in a fine naval officer is an exacting, technically competent, seagoing fighter at the tactical level. The naval officer student knows the platform for which he is groomed to fight and may command; he is an expert at teamwork, for he could not go to sea without it. (After all, "crew" is a naval term.) Yet, he tends to be independent for he must depend ("unodir") on himself in the potentially hostile environment of the sea, often distant from someone who exercises authority over him.

What we must do here at the Naval War College is not to reduce his sense of independent competence but to enlarge his focus so that he can move intellectually from his tactical platform and tactical experience level through a combined arms, theater-level outlook toward the increasingly abstract realm of strategy. He must leave behind the "hard" knowledge of operating a tactical platform and move towards the "soft" knowledge of national (and allied) strategy. Here the process of decision making deals with the less tangible and more intellectual tools of analysis, perception, and resolution. We try to advance his ability to think and develop a position on what is the right thing to do.

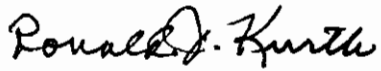
Let me pause momentarily before going on. My numerous and mighty fine non-Navy students, upon reading this essay, could be concerned that I am narrowly focused, excluding their Service or their experience. I ask for their tolerance as I answer the question in the context it was put to me.

We do not hope to develop strategists in one year, nor could we reach such a goal in ten years with most students. Aristotle made the distinction between theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. Practical wisdom involves the ethical life of the individual and the political life of the community. Strategy is part and parcel of practical wisdom. And, as in all such wisdom, it is achieved not only by reflection and study but by action and engagements in which the stakes are often high. We deal with officers whose interests are mainly action oriented. Few are intellectuals, and there are reasonable limits to their interest in the classroom. Rather, we add thought to action in the lives of officers. We may uncover or rekindle a latent intellectual curiosity, which, when encouraged in the year here, fosters an inclination toward further reading and study. From these officers may come a strategist, whom I define as someone who reads, studies, and

writes on issues of strategy. This kind of officer will pursue his interest and find an outlet for it in command or staff positions. You will read him in the pages of the *Naval War College Review* and the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, and you will find him in the planning section of major staffs.

Few individuals become strategists as few students of philosophy become philosophers. But for most students we can stimulate intellectual growth. We look to developing an ability to think broadly enough so that our officer students are not confined to the tactical outlook upon which their early careers were necessarily based. We will never make intellectuals of all our students, nor is it our purpose to do so. But we will produce officers far better equipped to function in the key operational and staff positions of the armed forces because they have more ability to think and develop a position along the road to virtue.

As with my thoughts previously expressed in this space, I welcome your letters of response. While I cannot answer all of them, I value them highly.

  
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President, Naval War College