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TACTICS REVIVAL

AT THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE

An article prepared

by

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Director of the Naval War College Tactics Department 1972-73

In the new War College curriculum instituted in September 1972, "tactics" was one of the three disciplines taught in the new curricula of both the senior and junior courses. The rationale for studying strategy and management at the War College seemed self-evident, but why tactics? We had come to believe that tactics was a specialized subject which belonged in the domain of functional warfare schools. Tactics is taught in the Fleet ASW School, Air Training Command, Submarine School, and Fleet Anti-Air Warfare School. Yet tactics had virtually disappeared as a subject of study at the Naval War College.

Not since 1958 had the word "tactics" appeared anywhere in the course descriptions of subjects taught at the Naval War College. This was true despite the fact that the U.S. Naval War College had earlier pioneered in the teaching of tactics as a discipline of the naval profession. Strategy and tactics were the principal studies at the college from its inception until the 1950's. War gaming had been developed at the college as an invaluable means for tactical instruction and tactical innovation. Admiral Nimitz gave great credit to the Naval War College's tactical instruction and war gaming courses when he said in 1960:

The war with Japan had been reenacted in the game rooms at the War College by so many people and in so many different

ways, that nothing that happened during the war was a surprise—absolutely nothing except the Kamikaze tactics toward the end of the war; we had not visualized these.

The reasons why tactics disappeared as a subject of study in the late 1950's are not important now. We need only note that it happened and that eventually tactics was supplanted in the senior and junior courses by subjects called seapower and naval operations. These were essentially descriptive courses in functional naval warfare. Students were provided selected readings and lectures on current capabilities and tactical doctrine for antisubmarine warfare, air strike warfare, submarine warfare, electronic warfare, et cetera. Students also participated in one or two large-scale war games in the Naval Electronic Warfare Simulator.

Tactics, as it is taught at the Naval War College today, however, places relatively little emphasis on imparting the latest information about functional naval warfare. Rather, our objective is to concentrate instruction on those aspects of the subject which will enhance the students' capabilities for making sound tactical decisions. In this sense the new Tactics curriculum shares the same goal as its sister discipline—Strategy and Management. That is, it focuses on the decisionmaking process.

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The process of dealing with problems, of course, is essentially the same whether one is dealing with a problem in strategy, management, or tactics. One must first determine the specific objectives to be achieved and then select the measures of effectiveness by which the outcome of a possible course of action can be tested to determine if the desired objectives will, in fact, be achieved. After identifying the possible courses of action, taking into account all the factors of assets available, obstacles to be overcome, and possibilities or limitations inherent in the situation and the environment, one must then weigh each possible course of action in terms of the selected measures of effectiveness. Finally, a choice can be made which offers the most promising balance between gain, cost, and risk.

Although the decisionmaking process is essentially the same for dealing with problems of strategy, management, and tactics, the objectives, measures of effectiveness, possible courses of action, and elements of gain, cost, and risk are derived, in each discipline, from a specialized body of knowledge. The purpose of each of the three new courses in the Naval War College curriculum was to offer the students an opportunity to expand their understanding of these disciplines and to sharpen their skills as decisionmakers by solving problems. The problems that students were tasked to address were those involving high levels of uncertainty, often with incomplete information, and for which there is no single, correct solution.

A Tactics course was designed to accomplish this purpose and offered to the senior students in the College of Naval Warfare in the last trimester of academic year 1972-73. The course required the students to address realistic, current, tactical problems in each of the four mission areas of today's Navy: sea control, projection overseas, naval

four mission areas were chosen as the topical framework for two reasons. We wanted to break away from the patterns of thought associated with the traditional boundaries of functional naval warfare. These boundaries often seem to be either the origin or the product of excessive parochialism. Also, we wanted to emphasize the inseparability of strategy and tactics. Since the objectives of tactical action derive from strategy and tactical measures of effectiveness relate to strategic objectives, it seems useful to organize tactical problems according to mission category. A mission which consists of a statement of a task to be performed and its purpose is a natural link between concepts of strategy and tactics.

Mission area problems were developed mainly through use of scenarios. We thought it would be most useful for the students to adopt the role of a task force commander with present day forces, responsible for executing missions in a credible, limited war environment, opposed by realistic potential enemy forces. A single scenario was designed for both the sea control and projection overseas studies. The student assumed the role of an amphibious task force commander assigned to deliver high value military cargo to an ally in Africa and to withdraw important communications equipment and personnel from that country in the face of an externally supported insurrection and the threat of Soviet naval intervention. In this context students addressed four problems in sea control:

- Ocean Surveillance
- Distant Support
- CV Support
- Antiship Missile Defense

They addressed six problems of projection overseas. These were associated with employment of a marine battalion landing team to deliver the cargo safely and to relieve the communications sta-

Maneuver Ashore
 Movement Ashore
 Carrier Operations
 Air Superiority
 Air Interdiction
 Close Air Support

The sea control and projection overseas problems were the main body of the new Tactics course. They were preceded by two studies designed to prepare the students for this effort. The Course began with a review of the fundamentals of naval weapon systems. Seven days were devoted to an examination of the factors which govern the capabilities of the principal naval sensors, weapons, platforms, and command and control systems. This was followed by 6 days of engagement analyses. Here students studied current tactical doctrine for six combatant types in one-on-one engagements. These were:

Nuclear Submarine vs. Nuclear Submarine
 ASW Aircraft vs. Nuclear Submarine
 Destroyer Escort vs. Nuclear Submarine
 Antiship Missile vs. Guided Missile Destroyer
 Fighter Aircraft vs. Bomber
 Attack Aircraft vs. Guided Missile Cruiser

In each case students were given data on the capabilities of each weapon system and selected readings on current tactical doctrine. They were expected to identify, during seminar discussions, the possibilities and limitations of single unit tactics which must be understood at the task force commander's level. Their effort depended upon an understanding of the factors which limit the performance of weapon systems, learned in the fundamentals study. This building block approach enabled the class to tackle problems in the sea control and projection overseas studies despite the fact that less than half the students were line officers with experience in naval tactics.

A different approach to war gaming was used in the new Tactics course. War gaming at the War College had become

Most games were large-scale fleet actions, involving many forces on both sides, and extending over several days or weeks of action. The Naval Electronic Warfare Simulator (NEWS) has the capability of tracking and displaying 40 separate units or groups on a master screen. It does not, however, have the capability of determining the outcome of interactions. This must be done by hand, using performance probability curves, environmental data, and random number tables. As a result, games are often bogged down while interactions are being calculated. Also, dozens of people are required to man all the stations and keep the action moving, but only a handful of people are in a position to make tactical decisions.

Since the main thrust of the new course was to enhance student decision-making capabilities, we wanted a game that would give each student the opportunity to make tactical decisions. We did this by dividing the students into teams of four or five. The scenario was the one used in the sea control and projection overseas studies. Each student had his turn acting as the task force commander, with other team members serving as his staff. An operation order, charts, intelligence summaries, and performance data on all friendly and enemy forces were issued to each team. Each "admiral" was given a situation involving a tactical problem. His problem might be threatening weather and need for replenishment, trade-offs between need for reconnaissance and emission control, indications of a new enemy threat, or battle damage to some of his forces. He was given limited time to make his decision and write out appropriate orders or instructions. A faculty moderator assigned to each team functioned as the enemy commander and interaction evaluator. He devised a response to the student's course of action which resulted in a suitably altered situation requiring new student decisions. Each "admiral"

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started with a different situation so he was unaffected by what his predecessors had done. He was given two responses which provided three decision opportunities in about 90 minutes of play. Following the play, each "admiral" described and defended his decisions in a critique session with his teammates and a faculty committee.

In all, the third trimester at the War College covered 41 classroom days in a 9-week period. The distribution of time in the Tactics Course was as follows:

Fundamentals of Naval	
Weapon Systems	7 days
Engagement Analyses	6 "
Sea Control	7 "
Decision Game	4 "
Projection Overseas	7 "
Naval Presence	4 "
Nuclear Deterrence	3 "
Introduction, Final Exam, Review	3 "
	41 days

It is evident from the above table that three-quarters of the time available for Tactics was devoted to sea control and projection overseas problems and the preparatory work for them. Only 3 days were allotted for nuclear deterrence. This may seem incongruous when one notes that the first priority mission for the Navy today is nuclear deterrence. Others might argue that naval presence is the most politically useful mission the Navy is likely to have in the next decade and therefore should have received more attention.

Naval presence and nuclear deterrence were given less emphasis in the Tactics course for separate reasons. The tactical problems associated with nuclear deterrence are related, almost exclusively, to highly technical and specialized questions of targeting, SSBN survivability, and command and control. These questions are not readily addressed in a short course focused on tactical decisionmaking. In the case of naval presence, the employment of naval forces for diplomatic objectives is more usefully studied in courses on international relations and military and

naval strategy. The utility of naval ships for presence missions depends ultimately on their combat capability. The combat tasks for naval ships and aircraft all lie within the sea control and projection overseas areas.

We were fortunate, however, in having a superb textbook available on the theory and practice of naval presence, *Gunboat Diplomacy* by James Cable. Besides reading and discussing the book, the students heard two lectures by and participated in seminars with the author. They also did an analysis of the circumstances incident to sending the nuclear powered aircraft carrier *Enterprise* into the Indian Ocean during the India-Pakistan war of 1971.

The principal concepts of nuclear deterrence—the notion of stability and the factors affecting stability, the importance of perceptions at various levels on both sides, and the value and dangers of uncertainty in deterrent strategies—were studied by means of selected readings, a lecture, seminars, and a negotiating game in which the students sought to negotiate a SALT-II agreement. They were divided into United States and Soviet negotiating teams. The teams on each side had objectives, bargaining chips, and instructions which were realistically different and conflicting. The teams were allowed 1 full day to negotiate the best agreement obtainable for their side. Four of the most balanced and logical agreements were briefed to the student body.

The revival of tactics at the Naval War College is in consonance with a movement on several fronts to improve tactical performance and tactical development in the Navy. It seems evident that the War College can and should serve a unique function in the conceptualization and codification of tactics as a discipline of the naval profession. Such a task, however, will not be easy. Naval weapon systems, naval strategies, and naval tactical problems are far more complex now than they were during the

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years preceding World War II when the Naval War College achieved its great success in the area of tactics development. So it is not simply a matter of doing again what was once done extremely well.

Experience with the new Tactics course this year indicates the direction of several improvements that can be made. The new course was clearly more beneficial than the courses it replaced. Its shortcomings were more in execution than in concept. The reading materials assembled for the students were too detailed in some cases, too general in others; occasionally they were too hurriedly or inadequately prepared. The faculty labored hard to stay ahead of the students through every step of the course. It is certain that a more experienced, better prepared faculty will do a better job. There were some unfortunate omissions in the course. Joint operations were needlessly omitted from the scenario used. Some of the problems devised for homework were either too simple or overly complex.

These shortcomings can and will be

improved upon next time. New ideas for exercising decisionmaking skills through gaming will be perfected. *Tactics is back in the curriculum of the Naval War College because mastery of tactics is an essential part of every professional naval line officer's career development.*

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Capt. William K. Yates, USN (Ret.), is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and the U.S. Navy's Intelligence School, Naval Language School, and Nuclear Power School. He has served as Assistant Naval At-

tache' in Paris and has been Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. *Snook* (SSN-591), the U.S.S. *John Adams* (SSBN-620), and the Naval Submarine School in Groton, Conn. Prior to his retirement, he served on the faculty of the Naval War College occupying the Charles A. Lockwood Military Chair of Submarine Warfare and as Chairman of the Tactics Department. Captain Yates is currently engaged in independent research and writing in the broad area of naval tactics.

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Changes in tactics have not only taken place after changes in weapons, which necessarily is the case, but the interval between such changes has been unduly long. An improvement of weapons is due to the energy of one or two men, while changes in tactics have to overcome the inertia of a conservative class.

Mahan, 1840-1914