

1954

## Naval War College Opening Address

Lynde D. McCormick  
*U.S. Navy*

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

---

### Recommended Citation

McCormick, Lynde D. (1954) "Naval War College Opening Address," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 7 : No. 9 , Article 2.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol7/iss9/2>

This Article 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](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## **SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE READER**

**The material contained herein is furnished to the individual addressee for his private information and education only. The frank remarks and personal opinions of many Naval War College guest lecturers are presented with the understanding that they will not be quoted; you are enjoined to respect their privacy. Under no circumstances will this material be republished or quoted publicly, as a whole or in part, without specific clearance in each instance with both the author and the Naval War College.**

**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW was established in 1948 by the Chief of Naval Personnel in order that officers of the service might receive some of the educational benefits of the resident students at the Naval War College. Distribution is in accordance with BUPERS Instruction 1552.5 of 23 June 1954. It must be kept in the possession of the subscriber, or other officers eligible for subscription, and should be destroyed by burning when no longer required.**

**The thoughts and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the Navy Department or of the Naval War College.**

**NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
REVIEW**

**Issued Monthly  
U. S. Naval War College  
Newport, R. I.**

## **NAVAL WAR COLLEGE OPENING ADDRESS**

Presentation by

*Vice Admiral Lynde D. McCormick, U. S. N.*

to the

Naval War College Classes of 1955

on 28 August 1954

Gentlemen:

I extend to you — the Naval War College Classes of 1955 — a hearty welcome both from myself and the staff. I am delighted to see so many old friends among you and will have great pleasure in learning to know the rest of you. We are looking forward to working with you in the various courses, and are sure that you will share our feeling that a year at the Naval War College is one of the best years of one's career.

You will note that I have said we would work with you. The Naval War College provides a course of study and the staff to administer it. It provides information, an important staff function. And it provides every possible opportunity for mental growth and for intellectual discipline, including emphasis on logical thought processes leading to sound decisions.

You have been sent here to stimulate your thinking; to increase your understanding of the fundamentals of warfare; and to permit you to contribute something of yourself, your experience, your own best thoughts, to the pool of knowledge which forms the basis for our actions now and in the future.

Collectively, you — the student body — are our most important source of new information and new ideas. The naval officers among you reflect all of the varied work of the Navy from your recent duties. You officers of the other services, and the representatives from other government departments, bring us a stimulating flow of ideas and methods from outside the Navy, which

broadens our perspective. Please give freely from your experience and receive with an open mind the experiences of others. You have here an unequalled opportunity to learn much from such associations.

It is natural for students to take their work seriously here, and you must feel a great sense of urgency now to fit yourselves to do your part in keeping our country ready. In fact, many of us consider that never before have the country, the free world, and civilization itself, been in greater peril.

The pressure of the situation is tremendously magnified by the political fact that we have become the leader of the democratic world. In the assumption of that leadership, we have inherited grave responsibilities for the support and direction of the efforts of all free nations in our common cause. This leadership, thrust upon us as a consequence of our national strength and resources, has in the past proved to be an enormously difficult and costly undertaking. The future seems to promise no easing of the burden. Also, the requirement of thinking in terms of **collective** security entails a substantial modification of a set of national attitudes and policies which guided us for so long.

Another pressing and great factor is that the swift technological changes of our times present a constant challenge to the validity of our concepts with regard to tactics and the application of new weapons in our national strategy. Weapons development proceeds at such a pace that some devices literally become obsolete on the drawing board. This rapidly changing situation confronts the free world with a terrific problem, taxing human ingenuity to the utmost to solve, yet a problem which we must solve correctly if our way of life is to survive.

Never has there been a time when there has been so great a need for the United States as a nation, and for those of us here as its service representatives, to keep our concepts up-to-

date, and ready for the future. The changing situation has confronted us with the necessity of adjusting our whole pattern of thinking within a single generation. We cannot tarry long to refight wars of the past. We must concentrate on the struggle of the present and the possibilities of the future.

Our nation's might is committed politically and militarily on a global scale. All government departments share the burdensome responsibilities of that commitment. We, in the Navy, find an ever-increasing requirement for the participation of naval officers in the many Joint and Allied commands, and in many of our own national agencies, in positions of command, policy formulation, and strategic planning. This has generated the need for large numbers of officers who, in addition to being professionally competent in the old sense, have a keen understanding of the Navy's strategic roles and its true position in the national defense structure. The increase in technological development and the increase in U. S. global commitments have made it increasingly important for an officer to become a master of his profession. That is the challenge before you all.

Without a grounding in fundamentals an officer is, as time progresses, more and more likely to be guided solely by his own experience and associations. His viewpoint is apt to remain correspondingly restricted, and his judgment to be limited to matters of which he has had first-hand or specialized knowledge. Even the most varied combination of duties afloat and ashore falls short of presenting the whole picture. For instance, the tactics of fleet action have given way to large and diverse numbers of air, surface, and subsurface elements operating on a theater scale, each a complex problem in itself and doubly so in its necessary interaction with others. Naval operations have replaced tactics in its original sense of combat with the enemy, and our studies must be broadened to reflect these changes.

Strategy, both national and military, must now encompass all elements of a highly complex and integrated world order. No

longer can strategy be passed down solely by word of mouth from flag officer to flag captain, as was done effectively in the Royal Navy in Nelson's day. Its complications are increasing at a greater and greater rate, to the point where we must be very careful not to let our study and thinking dwell too much even on the pattern of naval warfare which was so successful in World War II.

The whole question of naval warfare of the near future is of fundamental—in fact, paramount—importance to the Naval War College. Nuclear weapons force us to appraise carefully each of our concepts which are based on actions in the past, and to bend every effort toward the development of concepts valid today and tomorrow. Truly, the War College is now faced with the most difficult and challenging period of its existence. It must do its full part in preparing the Navy to meet its responsibilities attendant upon United States world leadership against an implacable and powerful enemy in an atomic age.

This college is the only place within the naval service where war is studied as a whole, where the art and science of naval warfare is examined in its broadest perspective. It is also the only place where officers have the time and the opportunity to make such studies. Senior officers in positions of responsibility are constantly plagued by the incessant pressure of current business, by the day-to-day task of meeting the urgent requirements imposed by their immediate responsibilities. Such pressure does not allow a search for fundamentals, a thorough examination of new ideas, or intensive study and reflective thought. The War College provides the opportunity for all of these.

In the history of the War College, the distinction between education and training has always been basic, and the College has regarded its educational function as primary and its training function as secondary. By training, I mean indoctrination in a technique for performing a specific function—generally involving the mastery of more or less standard procedures for dealing

with some specific, fairly well-defined situation. Education, on the other hand, is designed to cultivate judgment; the ability to analyze a complex situation, to weigh factors, and to choose soundly. The College aims to supply the maximum of such education, for good judgment — professional judgment — is the basic requirement of a successful military commander.

The conduct of war is indeed a matter of judgment, rather than of fixed rules and formulae. Professional judgment must be grounded in knowledge, which in turn is based on the history and the science of war. The actual exercise of professional judgment might well be called the Art of War.

I found an article in the Library which I consider pertinent to this subject, from which I should like to quote a part:

“An Art of Naval War becomes . . . imperative from the very fact that the rapid, many-sided activity in the development of weapons produces confusion in the mind, which must by all means be ended, if possible. Moreover, if we clear our own heads and settle our own convictions, we may produce some effect on the popular understanding, which sorely needs it . . . If possible, we must get hold of the principles, which, throughout all changes, underlie naval war; of the strongly marked outlines around which lesser details can be filled, and to which they can be referred; by which this or that specious proposition can be judged and to be sound or rotten . . . The search for and the establishment of leading principles — always few — around which details group themselves, will tend to reduce the confusion of impression to simplicity and directness of thought, with consequent facility of comprehension.”

This, gentlemen, is from an article on **Naval Strategy**, written in 1911 by Admiral Mahan.



The War College does seek for fundamental principles rather than rules, and will continue to do so.

You will see that the War College does not attempt to develop specific plans for winning either battles or wars — rather, it seeks to increase the capabilities of its officers so that they will be able to make sound decisions and to formulate good plans when they are faced with the real problems of actual war.

The War College encourages free discussion, free thinking, and, particularly, an inquiring attitude. It seeks to develop independence of thought, and encourages dissent from majority opinion so long as it is informed, reasoned and objective. A long-established policy here is for a large measure of freedom of discussion. As long as the bounds of propriety are observed and the discussion is in a temperate spirit, I urge you all, regardless of rank or service, to speak freely.

The War College holds as a basic premise that no mechanical or rigid process can be developed which will obviate the need for deep and thorough thinking. It recognizes the value of logic and makes use of its theory, principles and philosophy. It suggests certain methods of attacking complex problems, and offers certain forms as guides to the orderly marshaling of the thoughts. But it recognizes that no form or guide can do the thinking of the solver, nor substitute for judgment based on knowledge, experience, and character — those are the factors which produce sound decisions.

The War College, traditionally, has not and will not assign marks to student work. Your work here will be known to your seniors, contemporaries, and to many of your juniors who are your colleagues in the courses. That and the other natural stimulants which I have mentioned are sufficient for a group such as you.

It is quite proper that, at the Naval War College, our courses of study center attention on Sea Power and Naval Power.

An understanding of the nature of Sea Power, its employment in world affairs, and the methods of its application is basic in the courses. Yet, we must remember that Sea Power and Naval Power play only one part in our national strategy; in furthering our national interests and in achieving our national objectives. Our courses are designed to cover the broad picture and to present Sea Power in its proper perspective with the whole.

I do not say that any of you will get the full understanding of war, or of Sea Power, merely by taking a War College Course. Clausewitz devoted the greater part of his lifetime to the study of war, yet considered his writings as mere fragments which would have to be placed into a complete picture before final publication. Our Library contains literally thousands of articles and books treating on War and Sea Power, each the attempt of an author to contribute his bit to this boundless field. A final definitive work has never been written — and probably never will be. We do hope to stimulate your thinking, to give it direction, to shed light on certain problems, and to point out areas for further study. But each of you must achieve your own understanding by your own methods, your own thinking, and from your own practice in the past years.

Later, today, you will be given information on the objectives of the various Naval War College courses and an explanation of their curricula. I want to cover them only with a few general remarks. The Command and Staff Course has proved eminently successful in accomplishing its designed objectives, and will be continued this year in very much the same form as in the past. The inauguration last year of the Course in Naval Warfare, in lieu of the former courses in Strategy and Tactics and Strategy and Logistics, marked a normal step in keeping pace with the needs of the Navy. Emphasis will still be placed on Strategy, Tactics and Logistics. All are elements of Naval Warfare. The new courses recognize the impossibility of separating these elements for isolated study, for all are interrelated and all are responsibilities of Command. Regarding the First and the new

Second Year Courses in Naval Warfare, I should like to dispel any ideas you may have formed concerning the level of the curriculum of each of the two years. There is no difference in level. In its particular field of reference, each year is the highest level course available in the Navy. The scope of the educational field at this general level has grown too large to be covered in one year. Accordingly, we have established two courses in the same general field with different emphases in each.

All of our courses must accomplish a task implicit in the War College's traditional concept of its mission: that of developing not only military leaders but military statesmen. Today's society presents a highly complex problem in the integration of the elements of national power — political, military, economic and social. Today's world situation causes us to deal with not only our own problems but those of a coalition of free nations, each with its own culture, outlook, legitimate aspirations and objectives. We, as military officers and perforce military statesmen, must have an understanding of the basic realities and all of the elements which underlie our national security within this system of collective security. Our courses are designed to foster such understanding.

During the year, all of you will gain considerable factual knowledge of the world we live in. This is merely a by-product, for it is not our final goal. The goal is for you to take a great step toward becoming a truly educated officer.

We shall pursue courses of study, then, which will provide you with:

**First**, an understanding of the underlying philosophy of warfare and of the fundamental principles of naval warfare and sea power.

**Second**, familiarity with, and practice in, logical thought processes necessary for the orderly solution of complex military problems.

**Third, an understanding of the political, economic, sociological and military factors affecting national and world situations in which the Navy performs its roles.**

**And finally, practical exercise in the development of reasoned estimates and the formulation of workable plans and orders to meet realistic or actual strategic situations.**

**By giving you this foundation and the incentive for further effort, the War College strives to provide intellectual leadership in the field of sea power and maritime strategy. But it is only through the exchange of your ideas, through your speaking, thinking and writing — not only this year but in years to come — that the War College will be able to make its full contribution of increased understanding of Sea Power and Naval Strategy to the armed forces and to the nation.**

**Gentlemen, the challenge and the opportunity are before you!**

## **BIOGRAPHY**

### **Vice Admiral Lynde D. McCormick, USN**

Admiral McCormick, President of the Naval War College, was graduated from the U. S. Naval Academy with distinction, second in his class, and commissioned Ensign in June 1915. He is a graduate of the Naval War College (1938) and a former member of its staff.

After graduation from the U. S. Naval Academy, he served on the USS WYOMING while she operated with the British Grand Fleet during World War I. Later the ship attended the surrender of the German High Fleet in the North Sea. During the period between World Wars I and II Admiral McCormick had a variety of assignments at sea and ashore, including two tours of duty in submarines.

On 1 February 1941 he reported for duty as Assistant War Plans Officer on the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet, and was serving in that assignment at the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In April 1942 he became War Plans Officer for Admiral Nimitz and served as such during the period of the battles of the Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal. Early in 1943 Admiral McCormick assumed command of the USS SOUTH DAKOTA, operating in the Atlantic Area and with the British Home Fleet in northern European waters. In October of the same year he became Assistant Chief of Naval Operations for Logistics Plans. At the same time he became Chairman of the Joint Logistics Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in that capacity accompanied Admiral King to the Second Quebec and Yalta Conferences. His next assignment was as Commander Battleship Division Three. In this command he acted as a Task Group and Task Force Commander for two months during the battle of Okinawa.

In November 1945, after taking part in the initial occupation of Japan, and a short tour in the Atlantic he became Chief of

Staff and Aide to the Commander-in-Chief, U. S. Pacific Fleet and Pacific Ocean Areas, and a month later was designated Deputy Commander-in-Chief. After a tour of duty as Commander Battleships-Cruisers, U. S. Atlantic Fleet, from February 1947 until November 1948, he assumed duty as Commandant, Twelfth Naval District.

In November 1949, Admiral McCormick was ordered to duty as Vice Chief of Naval Operations and in this assignment was promoted to the rank of Admiral on 22 December 1950. He succeeded temporarily to Chief of Naval Operations following the death of Admiral Sherman and became Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Command and U. S. Atlantic on 15 August 1951. In January 1952 he was appointed and assumed additional duty as, Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Upon assuming Presidency of the Naval War College in May 1954, Admiral McCormick reverted to the rank of Vice Admiral.