

## President's Forum

Pete Garvin Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy, President, Naval War College  
*The U.S. Naval War College*

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*Rear Admiral Pete Garvin is the fifty-eighth President of the U.S. Naval War College and a career patrol and reconnaissance pilot. He graduated, with merit, from the U.S. Naval Academy in 1989, with a bachelor of science in aerospace engineering. Garvin attended the National War College, graduating in 2005 with a master of science in national security strategy. He is also a 2015 alumnus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Seminar XXI. His previous commands include the "Fighting Tigers" of VP-8, Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing (CPRW) 10, Navy Recruiting Command, Patrol and Reconnaissance Group, and, most recently, Naval Education and Training Command.*

## PRESIDENT'S FORUM

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### *War Is Our Middle Name*

I WANT TO OPEN by publicly recognizing Dr. Carnes Lord, who retired this past fall after more than twenty years at the United States Naval War College (NWC), the capstone of a lifetime of distinguished service in government and academia. For the last seventeen years, he served as the Director of the Naval War College Press and Editor of this *Review*, where he published wide-ranging voices on topics critical to our Navy and the nation's defense, and burnished the already outstanding reputation of the College's scholarship and the quality of the work that we publish. Fair winds and following seas, Professor Lord.

An advantage of leading one of the oldest and most respected military education institutions is that our vision for the future leverages a rich tapestry of nearly 140 years of history. Since its founding in 1884, NWC has maintained a clear and unwavering focus on preparing joint and maritime warriors for the successful defense of all we hold dear. As our founding President, Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, said at the turn of the twentieth century: "War . . . may in certain circumstances, be averted. **But mark this well: It may be averted in one way only and that is to be fully prepared for it.** That is the meaning of this College: it is an instrumentality for the prevention of war by being prepared for it" (emphasis added). He went on to note: "If attendance here will serve, in any degree, to broaden an officer's views; extend his mental horizon on national and international questions, and give him a just appreciation of the great variety and extent of the requirements of his profession, the College will not have existed in vain." These words ring loudly and true over a century later and form the bedrock of the College's purpose today: to develop leaders able to deter war when possible, and fight and win when necessary.

A century ago, in quiet halls along the shores of Narragansett Bay, scholars and practitioners were considering possible futures for the nation and its allies following a devastating world war that saw nearly an entire generation of youth decimated in the trenches of Europe. Officers named Nimitz, Stark, King, and Halsey came to the Naval War College to study, analyze, and contemplate the geopolitical realities on the horizon. They also attempted to come to terms with the challenges and promise of emerging technologies such as airpower from the sea, silent and deadly warfare below the waves, and rapid long-range communication that enabled the command of disparate, distributed maritime forces around the globe.

The saying “History does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes” is frequently attributed to author and humorist Mark Twain. This phrase suggests that while different historical events may not unfold identically, within them we can observe patterns, similarities, and underlying principles across different periods. I often hear the rhymes of history at this extraordinary college as our students and faculty, perhaps almost subconsciously, emulate the work of their predecessors. In the twenty-first century, international and nonstate aggressors, changing national boundaries, evolving treaties and alliances, climate change, and economic codependencies swiftly have reshaped and redefined the global landscape and operational environment. Rapidly advancing technologies such as artificial intelligence, unmanned and robotic systems, and nearly instantaneous and ubiquitous communications via social media challenge this century’s leaders to prepare for potential engagement from seabed to space and cyberspace. All these factors urgently demand new operational concepts and an agile reordering of priorities. While the nature of war endures, the character is undoubtedly changing at an impressive pace.

We are well into what the commander of Special Operations Command and others have called a “decade of consequence” that requires innovation, collaboration, and determination from professionals across the government, Department of Defense, industry, academia, and allied partners. Naval War College students a century ago could gain experience and advance in rank for many years before answering a call to combat. However, the speed of current and emerging threats across the globe will demand a more rapid response from our alumni and the brave men and women they lead. We must work tirelessly at the College to ensure our students are ready to “fight tonight,” as conflict and combat may be much closer than previously predicted.

We can see the urgent need for NWC’s unique professional development activities in the troubling trends and sometimes dire forecasts offered by an international cadre of informed futurists, including our own. Our vision for how the College will respond to these complex and dangerous challenges revolves around our three primary lines of effort (as detailed in the College’s Strategic Plan):

- We will continue to refine and revise the College's "main battery" of *Delivering Education* necessary to overcome the national security risks in the ever-changing geopolitical landscape, to embrace the most effective teaching modalities, and to transition to "outcomes-based" assessments of our students' learning (about which I will speak in more detail in future President's Forum articles). Expanding our students' capacity for strategically minded critical thinking, ethical decision-making, and creative problem solving (in both resident and distance learning modes) will remain "job one." This coming fall, the College will undergo reaccreditation from the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) to ensure that we still meet all the standards necessary to award our graduate degrees. Reaccreditation by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff will follow closely behind the NECHE process.
- As they have been for previous generations, our College-wide *Research, Analysis, and Wargaming* efforts will be laser focused on issues directly linked to current and future war fighting. Our data-driven approach to developing, testing, and validating warfighting concepts strengthens our cognitive power in the face of uncertainty and growing complexity. The Chief of Naval Operations has designated NWC the pillar lead for war gaming—a critical component of the Naval Analytic Master Plan—across the entire enterprise, a role we have earned and welcome. The College is vigorously spearheading efforts to integrate all research activities within the naval wargaming enterprise and is facilitating the promulgation and integration of research findings across the naval analytic community.
- We will continue to conduct *Outreach and Engagement* activities with naval, joint, interagency, and international alumni, partners, and stakeholders. We will incorporate diverse perspectives, enhance interoperability, build partner capability and capacity, and foster a network of enduring relationships. In addition to our long-running Naval Command College and Naval Staff College resident educational programs for our international students, we are engaged worldwide daily through visits, conferences, and tailored outreach efforts. In September 2023, we hosted the Twenty-Fifth International Seapower Symposium, which has been called the largest gathering of maritime leaders in history. The event's purpose was to provide a forum for senior international naval leaders to discuss common maritime challenges and provide opportunities to enhance international maritime-security cooperation. It was a marvelous event, on which I will report in the future. In April 2024, we will host and lead a Regional Alumni Symposium in Goa, India, for Indo-Pacific partner-nation alumni and conduct talks in Delhi with additional representatives of the Indian government.

These three lines of effort aim squarely at accomplishing our overarching mandate, our charge “to ensure our graduates and leaders are best prepared to out-think, out-decide, and outfight any would-be adversary, wherever and whenever the Navy and the nation call.”

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Garvin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

PETER A. GARVIN

*Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy*  
*President, U.S. Naval War College*

