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Dr. Eliot Cohen was the keynote speaker for the Training and Doctrine Command “Strategic Leadership for the Army of 2020,” the three-day conference held at the Army War College. photo by Thomas Zimmerman.

While the class of 2012 was in the Nation’s Capital for the DC academic field trip, the Army War College hosted the leadership of the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command. An opportunity to explore “Strategic Leadership for the Army of 2020,” the three-day conference was inspired first, by USAWC historians’ Gettysburg staff ride lessons for strategic leaders, then by an unconventional view of strategic leadership for 2020.

Keynote speaker **Dr. Eliot Cohen** challenged the audience to consider that the world of 2020 is unknowable, that we can best prepare by developing effective strategic advisors, and that a liberal education is a wise investment.

Cohen, who is no stranger to the USAWC, was here at the invitation of TRADOC. Early in his academic career he taught for four years on the faculty of the Naval War College. But his familiarity with, interest in and commitment to senior officer education began as a summer intern in the USAWC Dean’s office in 1978.

His points are excerpted here:

- **As human beings we are terrible predictors of the future.** We operate in an unpredictable, sometimes random world. What we need to do is to less attempt to forecast the future but to prepare ourselves for uncertainty, not by leading but by giving good advice.

- As the Army develops its senior leaders for the future, it means the importance of education – serious, rigorous, and intense. **Education is a craft business.** Its best done in small batches over a long period of time by people who are completely committed to teaching and who understand it.
- **The military both executes strategy and advises in its formulation.** Most military education and training prepares officers for the execution part. But another critically important part is the advising part.
- To become effective advisors, senior leaders should consider **two hazards, six strategic questions, and four virtues of strategic advisors.**
- The hazards: First, **they may actually follow your advice** and, all courses may run ill. Strategic decisions are 51-49 kinds of decisions. Second, **the desire to be in the inner circle**, where strategic decision-making takes place, is profoundly corrupting. Strategy is an argument, reasoning from premises, evidence and logic.
- The strategic questions: **What are we trying to do? What else is going on? What are our options? What are our priorities? What is the sequence? What is our theory of victory and why, and how, do we think this will work?**
- The strategic virtues: **Empathy** (starting with the enemy). **Curiosity** (to include intellectual curiosity). **Humility** (face the likelihood of big mistakes and the need to correct them). **Courage** (Strategic advisors have to have courage to disagree with the boss, and it is very hard: the courage to be in the right with two or three or, if necessary, alone ... the courage to lose the fight and engage again when you have to).

Cohen was just one of the guest speakers brought in by TRADOC for the conference, which brought together leadership from TRADOC HQ and its subordinate institutions to discuss requirements, capabilities, and topics as they prepare for the Army of 2020 and support their mission of developing, educating and training Soldiers, civilians, and leaders to strengthen the U.S. Army as America's Force of Decisive Action.

During the conference participants heard from a variety of experts including **Gen. Ray Odierno**, Army Chief of Staff who stressed the need for adaptability and flexibility of the force as the Army transforms to meet the demands of an uncertain future.

Gen. Ray Odierno, Army Chief of Staff, was one of the guest speakers for the conference.

Other guest speakers included retired **Gen. Barry McCaffery**, who discussed strategic leadership and **Dr. Steve Gerras**, USAWC Department of Command leadership and



Management, who presented a session on general officer strategic leadership. Each TRADOC Center of Excellence made presentations on their role and programs to help prepare the service for the needs of 2020.



Participants also took part in a Gettysburg Staff Ride, led by USAWC experts.

“The staff ride was a great opportunity to learn valuable lessons from Gettysburg that we can apply today,” said **Gen. Robert Cone**, TRADOC commander.

Senior spouses also took part in a tailored program designed by **Christine Yuengert**, director of the USAWC Military family Program. The two-day program featured a “mini” Facilitating Leadership and Group Skills session, a USAWC program to help senior military spouses become strategic thinkers and problem solvers led by **Lisa Towery**. Two special speakers spoke about TBI and supporting military children.