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NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**WAR TERMINATION:
A THEATER CINC's RESPONSIBILITY?**

CORE COURSE 5605 ESSAY

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War must have an end point. A typical view of this end point might simply be that combatants met on the field of battle, an armed clash ensued, the dominant side won, and the war was over. In reality, this is typically what takes place. The critical task of making sure that the end of the war arrives on terms most favorable to the victor should be a significant area in the victor's planning. This task becomes more of a process rather than an event. As such, it must be planned for well in advance of the end being reached.

For the purposes of this paper, the end point for war will be called "war termination." The definition of war termination that I believe to be most accurate given the way in which the United States plans and executes its wars can be attributed to James L. Foster and Garry D. Brewer in And the Clock Strikes Thirteen: The Termination of War, (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1976). They define war termination as cessation of armed hostilities by political choice.¹

The individual on the ground when war termination takes place is the theater CINC. What are his responsibilities as they apply to war termination? In an effort to answer this question, this paper will examine war termination as it applies to strategy, assess existing doctrinal guidance concerning war termination, and discuss war termination planning in joint planning.

Strategy and War Termination

In his essay, "The Missing Link in Conflict Termination Thought," Keith A. Dunn describes the classic strategy formulation process as fundamentally having five major steps:

- 1 Identification of national interests and objectives,
- 2 A political decision about how important particular interests and objectives are, which is sometimes referred to as intensity of interest,
- 3 Identification of a threat, or threats,

¹ James L. Foster and Garry D. Brewer, *And the Clock Strikes Thirteen: The Termination of War*, (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, 1976) quoted in Bruce C. Bade, *War Termination: Why Don't We Plan For It?* (Wash, DC: National Defense University, 1994), 22

4 The development of a national strategy including all the instruments of national power ---social, political, economic, psychological, technological, and military---to obtain those interests and objectives, and

5 The development of a military strategy---including the procurement of forces to obtain and defend declared U S interests and objectives in the event diplomacy should fail ²

Classic Clausewitzian theory to which the U S subscribes concludes that strategy that includes the use of military force must be directed toward a given political end The use of military force (war) must be raised to the strategic level in order to achieve the desired outcome Clausewitz states

War is an instrument of policy It must necessarily bear the character of policy and measure by its standards The conduct of war, in its great outlines, is therefore policy itself, which takes up the sword in place of the pen, but does not on that account cease to think according to its own laws War is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means ³

With all this said, where does war termination enter into strategy? It is critical to achieving the desired end state that must be predetermined by our political leaders How, when and why the war is terminated are important questions with respect to attainment of political objectives and to the kind of peace to be achieved Even more fundamental are the campaigns planned and executed at the operational and tactical level in order to reach this ending point They must be focused on the defeat of the enemy's center of gravity and supportive of the grand strategy Finally, war termination is a critical component of military strategy no matter what type of war is being fought It applies across the spectrum from all out nuclear war to low intensity conflict to military operations other than war

² Stephen J Cimbala and Keith A Dunn, eds , *Conflict Termination and Military Strategy---Coercion, Persuasion, and War* (Boulder and London, Westview Press, 1987), 176

³ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed and trans Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton Princeton University Press, 1976), 610, 87

Why must the CINC and his staff be focused on war termination? As deeply entwined as war termination is in attaining political objectives, it would seem that the task of addressing war termination would be a responsibility of our political leadership rather than the military planner

In theory, at least, the classical strategy formulation process is extremely rational, and as a result, one would logically think that a major output of the system would be well-defined conflict termination goals. In fact, this is not the case, largely because at critical junctures during the strategy formulation process, political decisionmakers have abdicated their responsibilities and failed to provide the necessary political guidance which military strategists require if they are to develop military strategy and conflict termination options and alternatives ⁴

This is a fairly bold assertion as well as a damning statement. Justifying the claim is not the subject of this paper and will not be further explored. The bottom line is that the CINC must accomplish the mission as directed by the National Command Authority (NCA) and war termination is critical to the task ⁵. He must plan for successful war termination and achieve the objectives that ensure this success.

Before leaving strategy and war termination, a brief discussion of how wars have ended is in order. Paul Pillar in *Negotiating Peace* examined patterns and trends in 142 wars from 1815 to 1980 ⁶.

Pillar categorized wars since 1815 as interstate, extra-systemic and civil, noting five ways in which those wars ended: by capitulation, in which one belligerent imposed the solution on the other, by extermination or expulsion, in which one belligerent simply ceased to exist, by absorption into a larger conflict, by withdrawal of one of the belligerents, by the intervention of a third party, usually an international organization, and by negotiation.

⁴ Stephen J. Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn, eds., *Conflict Termination and Military Strategy---Coercion, Persuasion, and War* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987), 176.

⁵ A good, light reading account of the process of planning and executing war that covers the gamut of involvement from the President to the CINC and ultimately the Joint Task Force Commander if he is not the same as the CINC can be found in Bob Woodward's *The Commander's* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991). It focuses on the key player involvement, their actions, and thoughts, spanning both the Reagan and Bush administrations as the U.S. executed Operations JUST CAUSE and DESERT SHIELD/STORM.

⁶ Paul R. Pillar, *Negotiating Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 11-30.

Patterns of termination revealed that most interstate wars since 1815 have ended by negotiation, whereas civil extra-systemic wars have more often ended in extermination/expulsion or capitulation⁷

U S military doctrine states that there are only two general means for obtaining objectives and subsequent war termination by force⁸ The first is an imposed settlement reached by the domination or overthrow of the opponent's military strength and political policy, and the second being a negotiated termination that seeks concession through coordinated military and negotiating actions⁹ Does this assessment and the Joint Pub 3 0 specified means of termination provide insight as to how one might better plan for war termination? Perhaps, but the critical problem will be one of predicting outcomes if specific plans are executed Due to human nature and the old "fog and friction" of war, I believe it would be very difficult to develop fill in the blank, "cookie cutter" strategies to achieve given termination options that would apply carte blanche They may however, be useful in the preliminary strategic planning stages should they be used as simple starting points

Doctrinal Guidance and War Termination

A review of published military doctrinal guidance concerning war termination begins with the keystone document for joint operations, Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* "It provides fundamental principles and doctrine for the conduct of joint and multinational

⁷ Bruce C Bade, *War Termination Why Don't We Plan For It?* (Wash, DC National Defense University, 1994), 9-10

⁸ Bruce B G Clarke in his *Conflict Termination A Rational Model* (Carlisle Barracks, PA Strategic Studies Institute, 1992) offers six ways in which conflicts can be ended These six ways all fit somewhere under the two broad U S doctrinal categories

⁹ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, I-9

operations ”¹⁰ The focus of the publication, quite naturally, is the use of the military element of power to fight and win

When other instruments of national power (diplomatic, economic, and informational) are unable or inappropriate to achieve national objectives or protect national interests, the US national leadership may decide to conduct large-scale, sustained combat operations to achieve national objectives or protect national interests, placing the United States in a wartime state. In such cases, the goal is to win as quickly and with as few casualties as possible, achieving national objectives and concluding hostilities on terms favorable to the United States and its multinational partners ¹¹

A critical element of this focus is the “concluding hostilities on terms most favorable to the United States” portion. This is war termination. One naturally thinks that some meat is going to be found on this bone and this war termination task is going to become clear as a bell. The publication also specifies that national security strategy and national military strategy provide strategic direction for combatant commanders (for the purposes of this paper, the theater CINC). CINCs “in turn, provide guidance and direction through their combatant command strategies and plans for the employment of military forces, in conjunction with interagency and multinational forces, in the conduct of military operations ”¹² Logically deduced, the CINC must plan for war termination and it is a critical element of focus of the publication, therefore, the “how to” and further explanation must follow.

Specific CINC guidance and responsibilities as they apply to war termination found in Joint Pub 3-0 include

-- Conflict termination should be considered from the outset of planning and should be refined as the conflict moves toward advantageous termination

¹⁰ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 1

¹¹ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, I-2

¹² Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, I-4

- Conflict termination is an essential link between national security strategy, national military strategy, and posthostility aims
- Identification of conflict termination criteria and postconflict objectives and measures
- Clearly defining what constitutes success, including conflict termination objectives and potential posthostilities activities ¹³

It must be pointed out that these bits of guidance and specified responsibilities are not neatly packaged but are scattered throughout the publication appearing to be added to gain effect rather than being succinctly addressed as this important planning consideration should warrant. The “how to” achieve successful war termination is equally difficult to find and discern. One finally begins to conceptualize how to plan for and achieve this success when the word “objectives” is added to “war termination.” Just as it is a key step in the strategy development process, deriving the military objectives from the political objectives is the key link. Joint Pub 3-0 makes the tie and the light comes on when it states, “military victory is measured in the achievement of the overall political aim and associated termination objectives.”¹⁴ This is further amplified in a discussion of the Estimate Process when the Pub states, “Conflict termination objectives should include the military objectives that will provide the basis for realizing the political aim regardless of whether an imposed or negotiated termination is sought.”¹⁵ Successful war termination must have the clear political objectives and desired end state provided early on by our civilian leadership in the NCA.

At this point, it is important to point out that war termination and desired end state are not the same thing. Simply put, as war is executed, it is possible to achieve the specified end state but

¹³ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, I-8-I-9, III-4, III-8

¹⁴ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, I-10

¹⁵ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, B-1

not achieve the planned war termination objectives or vice versus. An example might be the U S war in Vietnam. In this case, war termination objectives were met but the desired end state was not achieved.

Further search for doctrinal guidance leads one to Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*. The purpose of this keystone document is simply as the title implies. "It sets forth fundamental principles and doctrine that guide planning by the Armed Forces of the United States in joint or multinational operations."¹⁶ One would expect that if planning for war termination is as important as it seems, this publication would logically be a good source. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Only one mention of war termination can be found and this is a bullet point on a figure depicting the Fundamentals of Campaign Plans.¹⁷ The two specified methods of planning military operations, the Deliberate Planning Process and Crisis Action Planning, are laid out in detail but no mention of planning for war termination is provided in either process. They focus on planning to fight and win.

An overall assessment of the doctrine provided in these two publications is that our doctrine specifies consideration of war termination in the planning process. What is missing are the practical steps that focus the warfighting on attainment of war termination objectives. Another problem area that is alluded to but lacks substantive guidance is the critical role that political objectives and the necessity of our civilian leadership to clearly articulate these objectives play in planning for war termination.¹⁸ Clearly, the NCA role is specified but nothing is provided

¹⁶ Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, I

¹⁷ Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, II-20

¹⁸ Bruce B G Clarke in his *Conflict Termination: A Rational Model* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1992) goes even further in his discussion of critical pieces of guidance that must be provided to include, "A clear statement by the political authorities of the desired situation in the post-hostility and settlement phases---a

about what to do if this role is not achieved as has previously been mentioned as tending to happen. Perhaps both problems could be addressed if clear doctrine was developed concerning methods to produce war termination objectives and associated techniques.

War Termination and Joint Planning

Joint military planning focuses on potentially engaging U S armed forces in hostilities and if this comes about, ensuring that our armed forces win. Typically, our planning ensures this will take place by employing overwhelming force. If this force is not focused on attaining war termination objectives, the successful outcome of winning may not achieve the desired outcome.

In order to ensure missing the mark does not take place, war termination planning must be undertaken early on and continuously refined. The following discussion of integrating war termination planning will focus on two of the four defense planning systems---the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) and the Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES). The JSPS can be thought of as the capstone that provides guidance to the CINC as he prepares for and executes his planning responsibilities in JOPES. "The JSPS provides strategic direction, assigns missions, tasks, forces, and resources, and designates objectives and rules of engagement"¹⁹ At the CINC level, JOPES is the planning system that "emphasizes joint operational planning for deterrence and effective transition to war. It provides the means to respond to emerging crisis situations or transition to war through rapid, coordinated execution planning and implementation."²⁰

vision of what the area should "look like" following the hostilities," and "A clear set of political objectives that when achieved will allow the above vision to become reality."

¹⁹ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, III-1

²⁰ Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, III-2

In the JSPS, the first place one would hope to find war termination guidance is in the Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG). The CPG is the Secretary of Defense's annual written policy guidance to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) concerning joint operational planning. It is the source document for the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP). The JSCP is produced by the joint staff and provides strategic direction to theater CINCs. It is the link between strategic planning accomplished through JSCP and the CINCs operational planning accomplished through JOPES.²¹ Although it is a "peacetime" document, it should provide any guidance available concerning war termination policy or objectives to the CINC as he proceeds with his planning.

The CINC executes his planning under JOPES. JOPES is focused on two planning processes, Deliberate Planning and Crisis Action Planning. As previously mentioned, no war termination planning or development is specifically mentioned in either the Deliberate Planning or Crisis Action Planning Processes described in Joint Pub 5-0. Deliberate Planning is a peacetime process that uses assumptions as the basis to focus planning. It is a "planning process for the deployment and employment of apportioned forces and resources that occurs in response to a hypothetical situation."²² Crisis Action Planning takes as much advantage of existing deliberate planning as possible but is always focused on existing circumstances at the time planning occurs. It is the "time-sensitive planning for deployment, employment and sustainment of assigned forces and resources that occurs in response to a situation that may result in actual military operations."

War termination planning to include the development of objectives must take place in both

²¹ Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, II-7, II-10

²² Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, GL-6

planning processes. If possible, the most refined planning should take place in deliberate planning. Just as the name suggests, crisis action planning is accomplished under entirely different and heightened circumstances. Under these conditions, the natural tendency is to focus on planning warfighting execution to accomplish the mission. The ability to lift war termination planning from existing deliberate planning shortens and focuses the planning process. In the deliberate process there are several phases where war termination guidance must be clearly provided in order to ensure planning develops required termination objectives and drives subsequent planning. The first is the Initiation Phase in which the CINC receives the planning task from the CJCS that should include any war termination guidance available. The second phase, Concept Development, is also a critical area for war termination planning. Both the Mission Analysis and Planning Guidance steps in this phase must incorporate considerations for war termination. Step 4 of this phase, the Commander's Estimate must include conflict termination objectives and supporting military objectives to accomplish the same. Finally, the last step in the Concept Development Phase, CJCS Concept Review, in which the Concept of Operations is approved by the CJCS, should include any adjustments required concerning war termination objectives and the concept to achieve these objectives and be provided by the CJCS.

In the compressed, time-sensitive Crisis Action Planning process there are two phases where war termination planning is critical. Again, a lift from existing deliberate planning efforts is most beneficial. Any adjustments based on existing circumstances must be made however. The two phases are phase III, Course of Action Development and phase V, Execution Planning. The product of phase III is the CINC's Commander's Estimate with a recommended course of action that is forwarded to the CJCS. The Commander's Estimate includes the same war termination

information as required in Deliberate Planning Phase V culminates with the preparation of an operations order which includes a Concept of Operation which must include the attainment of military objectives to meet termination objectives

Conclusion

Theater CINCs focus on planning and executing to achieve a specified end state in the conduct of their military operations. They need to ensure that their forces fight to achieve conditions that support established war termination objectives. The probability of this happening is much greater if requisite war termination objectives and supporting military objectives are developed in the planning rather than execution phase. Should adequate emphasis not be placed on war termination, B H Liddell Hart sums up the possible outcome very well

If you concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after-effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war. This lesson is supported by abundant experience²³

²³ B H Liddell Hart, *Strategy* (New York: Meridian, 1954), 353

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