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War Termination:
Why don't we plan for it?

LONGER ESSAY

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WAR TERMINATION: Why don't we plan for it?

Conflict termination should be considered from the outset of planning and should be refined as the conflict moves toward advantageous termination. (Joint Pub 3-0)¹

Americans like to think that war termination takes care of itself. One side--ours--prevails on the battlefield and it's over. The chief objective of wartime strategy is defeating enemy arms as quickly as possible with the least cost in friendly casualties.² As long as hostilities endure, diplomacy is subordinated to military requirements. War termination planning, such as it is accomplished, takes the form of civil affairs planning--the details of how the vanquished will be managed following capitulation of the enemy and cessation of hostilities. The victory of American arms in World War II, as well as in America's previous major wars, reinforced belief in the correctness, utility and efficacy of this kind of strategy.

Unfortunately, that view of war termination has stunted American military strategy, which has emerged as a relatively blunt instrument as America struggles to adapt to the rapidly changing conditions of the late Twentieth Century. This essay addresses war termination as it bears on strategy, examining analytical, theoretical and historical views and exploring the need for war termination planning in the military planning process.

The Concept of War Termination

By war termination³ I mean the process or act of stopping the fighting.⁴ The terrible costs of war have inspired countless works on its prevention; it seems worthwhile to devote some attention to its termination. Previous writers addressing this matter have struggled with the concept. They even have difficulty agreeing on what constitutes a war.⁵ Beyond this definitional problem, war termination is still a difficult concept, because it cannot be treated as a discrete subject: the initiation, conduct, and dynamics of

conflict itself impinge upon war termination in ways that defy setting analytic boundaries. Yet the act or process of stopping the fighting must be implemented through decisions, and logic suggests that such an act or process might be isolated for analysis.

For our purposes we will adopt a definition of war that encompasses armed conflict involving at least two belligerents. To concentrate on the difficulty of terminating conflict when it involves violence, and to avoid ranging too far afield into behavioral concepts of conflict resolution, the definition here encompasses only shooting wars--actions involving combat between organized forces. Finally, the focus is on termination, in the sense of a process or an event--one at the end of some other process.

Broadly construed under this definition, planning and executing war termination can cover a lot, from planning before a war starts to the negotiations following a truce. Narrowly construed, war termination might be the process of deciding when and how to stop the fighting when it becomes evident that war fighting objectives have been met or, perhaps, are no longer achievable. Either way, the concept can be applied to conflicts ranging from thermonuclear war to low intensity conflict.

If war termination is an event, one that comes about because of other events, it does not require too much thought (perhaps such an event would be an "end" rather than termination). If it is a process, however, with its own dynamics, it demands more attention in the planning process. While war might be ended by the exhaustion or disappearance of one of the belligerents--an event--war termination as a process implies that fighting can be stopped before exhaustion or annihilation of one or both belligerents. In this latter sense, war termination is political choice. It is a cost-avoidance process employing a rational approach, a rational relating of objectives and the measures to achieve them. It is this process that begs examination.

It is perhaps axiomatic that all military strategy aims at war termination. One way

or another, you are trying to get your enemy to quit fighting. But in terms of grand strategy, war termination is more than concluding hostilities. How the war is terminated, when the war is terminated, and why the war is terminated are important questions with respect to the attainment of political objectives and to the kind of peace achieved. The manner in which military campaigns are chosen, planned and fought bears crucially on how, why and when war is terminated. War termination strategies must work at the interface between grand strategy and military strategy, where military art meets political constraint. It is a most difficult juncture.⁶

Possibly that is why one searches official US military planning doctrine in vain for guidance on how to think about and plan for war termination.⁷

The Need for War Termination Planning

In the ideal American approach to strategy, war termination planning demands are minimal. If, as assumed in US war planning doctrine,⁸ the outcome of a war is expected to be the opponent's decisive military defeat, the commander's main war termination considerations are how to accomplish that defeat and--somewhat secondarily--how to deal with the defeated enemy following his capitulation. That involves more war-fighting planning than war termination planning. Joint doctrine even suggests that war termination criteria cannot be formulated until US forces prevail: "To facilitate conception of effective termination criteria, US forces must be dominant in the final stages of an armed conflict by achieving the leverage sufficient to impose a lasting solution."⁹ Nevertheless, even in such favorable circumstance, some military measures and methods of employing military force are likely to be more effective in producing a satisfactory peace than others.¹⁰ This is illustrated best by a negative example: brutal methods, or measures involving substantial collateral damage to civilians and civilian property, cause bitterness and sow the seeds of future conflict.

In less than ideal circumstances, when the commander is constrained or his plan frustrated, war termination becomes a very complex matter. If use of force must be limited--for example, by constraints on escalation--or is in some other way rendered ineffective in terms of decisively defeating enemy arms, relating means to ends and ends to means becomes much more complex. Decisions are required. War termination will not take care of itself.

That is increasingly likely to be the case. Past experience suggests that future wars will be characterized by constraints on one or both belligerents, and that such wars will be terminated short of complete defeat by agreement, negotiated tacitly or formally during the combat.¹¹ In that circumstance, it seems prudent to include war termination strategies--or at least to consider their salient factors--in contingency and wartime planning. At present little guidance is available to the US military planner trying to operate in that realm.¹²

The reader might be thinking that this task of addressing war termination is not the role of the military planner, that it is, rather, a task for the political leadership. Given properly constructed political objectives for the war, including those related to the preferred outcome, the military planner has merely to tailor military plans and military objectives to serve those ends.¹³ Were it only so simple. There is a need to deal with war termination strategies in the military planning process not only because military actions contribute to and shape war termination, but also because experience suggests it will not be done elsewhere. Moreover, just as military strategies cannot be formulated without political objectives, political objectives for war cannot be formulated without appreciation of military resources, capabilities, and limitations¹⁴ which in turn inform and shapes political objectives. Yet current military planning doctrine assumes political objectives as independently fixed and given, and there is no "doctrine" for establishing political objectives. A review of American attitudes toward war and a look at what some

studies have shown will reveal why.

A Penchant for "Winning"

Constructive American thinking on war termination has been inhibited by that notion that war termination takes care of itself, a notion deeply ingrained in the American perception of war as an anomaly--a terrible, temporary interruption of normality that must be afforded the utmost efforts to correct. A wartime strategy of overwhelming force, focused on defeat of opposing arms, has thus been America's strategy of choice in the industrial age. Geographic, demographic, economic and political factors made it, by and large, a successful choice. In a way, war termination did take care of itself in America's major wars--the Civil War, the First World War, and the Second World War.

America's experience in limited wars during the Cold War, far from providing a basis for alternative strategies, only strengthened the conviction in the correctness of the traditional approach. The drawn-out and inconclusive fighting in Korea and Vietnam did not result in redefinition of military strategy; rather, the calls were for return to the strategies of annihilation pursued by Grant in the Civil War, Pershing in World War I, and Marshall in World War II. The debate during the Korean War focused on Douglas MacArthur's assertion that there is no substitute for victory; it shed little light on how better to wage limited war. Subsequent thought on limited war theory, driven principally by the advent of nuclear weapons,¹⁵ took place almost exclusively in academic circles and was discredited in Vietnam.

After the Vietnam War, little rigorous thought was devoted to alternative strategies of war termination. Post-Vietnam thinking again came to the conclusion that application of overwhelming US force was the only reliable solution. Alternatives meant limited war, and limited war did not work well for America.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger codified this view in his 1984 speech to

the National Press Club outlining the criteria for committing US combat troops: "When we commit our troops to combat we must do so with the sole object of winning" (emphasis added).¹⁶ Samuel P. Huntington further articulated the view in 1986, arguing persuasively that America's use of military force must be tailored to America's particular strengths and weaknesses and that decisive military action is essential: "...when those situations [justifying the commitment of US forces to combat] arise, the United States should intervene rapidly, in an offensive mode, in a decisive manner, and so far as possible with overwhelming forces in the shortest time possible."¹⁷ Certainly this implies that war termination will take care of itself--we will just get in there and win.

The quick triumph of American arms in the Gulf War reinforced the trust in a strategy that makes a sharp distinction between peace and war and turns over the war to the war fighters with clearly defined military objectives. It seemed to vindicate those who had decried the limits deliberately set on American use of force in Korea and Vietnam, where America found it so difficult to terminate the fighting.

Departure from the Ideal

Nobody would suggest that a nation should commit troops to combat without intending to "win." In that sense, a war termination strategy aimed at quick defeat of enemy arms is theoretically ideal.¹⁸ It would be ideal--if it were always available and it always worked. Analysis of how past wars have ended reveals that it is not the prevalent outcome, and in practice it has several drawbacks.

That approach is increasingly difficult to pursue, for several reasons. The potential for unconstrained escalation in a nuclear environment is strong incentive to limit military means. International norms, legal or moral considerations, limited resources, and conflicting objectives in an increasingly interdependent world also impose severe constraints. Coalition warfare--more and more the norm for the United States--imposes

its own limitations. Other constraints become evident only after a war is well underway. Any of these can delay defeat of enemy arms, leading to costly escalation, loss of domestic support, or both.

Such a strategy also suffers from its extreme objective. Dependence upon winning unequivocally can lead to its own failure, because extreme war termination objectives are likely to meet the most extreme resistance. It can prolong war rather than shorten it.¹⁹

The logic of such a strategy shortchanges the war termination and postwar planning aspects of wartime strategy, leading to less than ideal postwar solutions and the creation of future problems. There are nagging doubts about the political results of the military victories in the First and Second World Wars. The manner of terminating the First World War sowed the seeds of the Second World War. The strategies pursued in the latter war contributed to a peace that required an expensive 40-year deployment of American forces in Europe and Asia, and arguably led to two subsequent American land wars in Asia.

Certainly, the dramatic changes in the international political landscape since the dissolution of the Soviet Union have altered the conditions under which future conflicts will be fought and settled. Some of the constraints that inhibited the use of US military force during the Cold War have diminished; under the danger of superpower conflict, the Gulf War could not have been waged as it was. Nevertheless, other constraints have grown stronger. Even the Gulf War was fought and terminated within distinct political and economic limits. The increasingly complex situations in which force might be used in this post-Cold War environment will place exceptional demands and constraints on military strategies. Wars will be limited wars.

The Realities of War Termination

The intellectual challenge of devising strategies for such limited wars is daunting, and there is strong appeal in the simplicity of an approach that requires only the expeditious defeat of enemy arms. Attempts to limit a strategy of decisive and complete military victory--or to add other objectives--lead to endless complications. Devising strategies for war termination then takes the strategist from the realm of purely military planning into the behavioral and psychological dimensions of bargaining, game theories, theories of escalation, theories of deterrence, and theories of communication. It is a world of great uncertainties.

The reader might begin to feel at this point that rather than a walk down a path, this business of war termination is a trip around the block. Thinking about war termination inevitably involves thinking about war fighting, and ultimately leads back to thoughts about war initiation and war prevention. It is an exceedingly difficult concept to bound; perhaps not surprisingly, the pertinent (not very voluminous) literature spends more pages discussing how wars start than addressing how to stop them. Nevertheless, that literature does cover a variety of approaches to thinking about war termination and contains an number of concepts of interest to the strategist. Analysis of a few relevant approaches and concepts could serve as a basis for developing a planning framework.

Limited War Concepts

Stephen Cimbala, who has focused more attention on war termination than any other recent writer, believes "agreed battle," escalation control, and coercive diplomacy are the essential components of a concept of war termination.²⁰ These are essentially concepts of limited war.

The agreed battle concept implies that the objectives of the participants are limited and that fighting takes place under tacitly agreed rules. Cimbala notes the limited military actions of the US and China in the Korean War. The implication for war

termination is that if objectives are limited, the means are controlled and war termination can be a rational process short of annihilation or exhaustion. Cimbala also sees the related concept of intrawar deterrence as central to limited war; belligerents hold out the presumably disadvantageous possibility of widening the war as a means to limit the actions of the other belligerent. Conversely, belligerents limit their efforts in terms of geography or military force in the belief that the other belligerent will refrain from escalating in areas inimical to their interests.

Escalation--the deliberate move to higher or different forms of force--is central to limited war theory and is a principal instrument in the bargaining that for many theorists constitutes the war termination process. Escalation is an inherently interactive process, with all the uncertainties that implies. Determining the forms and methods of escalation, calculating effects, coordinating it with diplomatic actions, and keeping it under control are essential tasks of war termination strategy.

Coercive diplomacy implies negotiating and fighting at the same time and can include escalation as one of its measures.

These concepts help focus the tasks of reconciling political objectives and military means, and of coordinating military actions with diplomatic measures. Both tasks are central to war termination strategies.

How Wars End

How wars have ended can shed light on how future wars might end. In his book *Negotiating Peace* Paul Pillar examined 142 wars from 1815 to 1980 in an attempt to discern patterns and trends.²¹ Pillar categorized wars since 1815 as interstate, extra-systemic and civil, noting five ways in which those wars were 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. Patterns of termination revealed that most interstate wars since 1815 have ended by negotiation, whereas civil and extra-systemic wars have more often ended in extermination/expulsion or capitulation. The pattern is interesting because it implies that understanding the kind of war will suggest strategies for terminating it. The trend suggests that strategies aimed at imposing a solution are becoming less applicable.

Those patterns bear out the relationship between extremity of the objectives and potential for compromise noted in the definitive work *On War* by the eighteenth century strategist Carl von Clausewitz. In his discussion of political objectives, he stated that the smaller the penalty you demand from your opponent, the less you can expect him to try to deny it to you.²² Pillar observed that when the stakes in a conflict are practically indivisible, so that neither belligerent can achieve its objectives without depriving the other of most of what it wants, there is likely to be little scope for negotiation and the fighting is likely to continue until one side is defeated decisively. That situation predominates in civil wars.²³

Stakes vary widely in interstate wars, but inasmuch as those wars rarely involve the elimination of one of the belligerents, there is generally room for negotiation. In extra-systemic wars (where only one of the belligerents is a state, such as in insurgencies) the relative stakes also vary widely from case to case. These wars have also been characterized by wide disparities in the strengths of the belligerents, and the manner of termination has often depended upon the will and interests of the stronger belligerent. Consequently, extra-systemic wars have had a variety of endings, most commonly by capitulation of the weaker participant or withdrawal of the stronger. Lessons drawn depend upon examination of individual cases.

Recent trends toward increased involvement of international organizations suggest

more categories of wars terminated mainly through negotiation.

The Problem with Objectives

Virtually every study of war termination concludes that failure to define objectives is the most common obstacle to rational war termination. War termination strategies cannot be devised nor can war termination decisions be made in the absence of clearly defined objectives. Deciding when to stop fighting requires an assessment of whether the benefits of continuing to fight outweigh the costs and risks. Without clarity of objective, accurate assessment of the costs and benefits is impossible. In many cases, moreover, communication of one's objectives to the opponent is a key factor in the opponent's calculation of when to stop fighting.

The importance of defining war termination objectives even before engaging in war has long been recognized. Clausewitz noted that "War plans cover every aspect of war, and weave them all into a single operation that must have a single, ultimate objective in which all particular aims are reconciled. No one starts a war--or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so, without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it."²⁴ The proposition that failures in war are attributable to failures in thinking through war termination objectives before engaging in war is the central theme in the most familiar recent work on war termination, Fred Ikle's *Every War Must End*.²⁵ The attention to defining objectives is justified, because obstacles to doing so are legion.

James L. Foster and Garry D. Brewer noted several such obstacles in a 1976 RAND study: Quixotic domestic political pressures might undermine willingness to pursue limited objectives in the face of potentially high costs of war; allies sometimes pressure other allies not to state prematurely objectives that might undermine their positions; and conflicts often arise between military and political leaderships over war

aims that risk military values, or that limit the use of available military means.²⁶

There are others. Defining attainable objectives demands understanding of military capabilities and limitations and agreement on how the capabilities will be used. Political leaders often fail to understand these factors, or military leaders fail to communicate them effectively.

The need to gain domestic support for pursuit of objectives can lead to inflating their importance. That sets in motion new dynamics: the more important the objective, the more likely it is to drive toward extreme measures. Extreme measures in turn raise the stakes--means begin to determine the ends.

Objectives are often cast in ambiguous terms because credibility suffers if they are not achieved. This same motivation focuses political leaders on avoiding undesirable outcomes rather than on achieving desirable outcomes; negatively cast objectives are not conducive either to offensive military strategies or to war termination.

Confusion can arise when objectives communicated to the opponent are deliberately ambiguous in order to provide negotiating space.

The strategist must understand these obstacles to defining objectives in order to overcome them or, failing that, to take them into account in developing war termination strategy.

One other consideration relating to objectives is worth noting. When blood and treasure are invested in a war, that investment itself inevitably becomes part of the stake. It is much more difficult to moderate objectives or to cut losses when blood has been spilt for the cause. The implications for war termination are obvious.

Aiming to Negotiate

There are several reasons to develop war termination strategies aimed at early negotiations. Paul Pillar attributed the trend toward negotiated settlement in all types of

wars to changes in the international system (essentially, increasing interdependence) and the awesome capacity for mass destruction in the nuclear age.²⁷ Those developments have put a premium on prudent modulation of violence, reducing the ability of nations to use overwhelming force to impose settlements. Even in a less constrained environment, however, negotiation is an attractive war termination approach, particularly if it lowers the level or duration of the violence and thus saves resources. Finally, negotiation seems to produce a better peace. In his classic book *Strategy*, B.H. Liddell Hart notes that the most satisfactory peace settlements, even for the stronger belligerent, have been those made by negotiation rather than by a decisive military issue.²⁸

Absent the certainty of quick victory or the capacity to endure a prolonged war, then, the wise strategist will develop war-fighting strategies that make negotiation both possible and likely.

Pillar's book *Negotiating Peace* is an excellent exposition of negotiating dynamics as they pertain to war termination, offering a series of pointers and recommendations for the wartime strategist. Using theoretical modeling techniques as well as historical evidence, he constructed a theoretical model of war termination bargaining and described probable events in phases leading from "uncertainty" through "understanding" to "basis for agreement," noting at each stage which military and diplomatic action was likely to evoke which response. He noted, for example, that military actions should demonstrate future capabilities. An enemy is more likely to negotiate if he believes you are willing to continue fighting. Military actions which employ greater efforts or more violence than might be expected tend to demonstrate determination, though care must be taken not to appear desperate. Likewise, actions that hold promise of inflicting even greater damage in the future are likely to increase a willingness to negotiate. Pillar's concept of disagreement costs²⁹ is especially interesting with respect to use of military action as a bargaining tool in war termination: the continuation of war exacts costs from both

belligerents; those costs are the price of continuing to disagree. Military actions can manipulate such disagreement costs by aiming at targets of particular importance to the enemy. Those actions might be different than operations directed at defeat of his armies, yet contribute more directly to termination of the war.

If the enemy is more concerned than you about disagreement costs, he is likely to be more willing to negotiate. That has another implication for military action: in such circumstances even relatively inefficient military actions can improve one's bargaining position and hasten negotiations. In the opposite situation, when disagreement costs concern you more than they do the enemy, military actions must be much more efficient to be useful in improving one's bargaining position or hastening negotiations.

Organizational and Behavioral Factors

Behavioral science has useful bearing on war termination strategy. The demands of relating ends and means include rational behavior, but such behavior is often skewed by failures of human nature or through institutional influence. Paul Bracken has suggested that one of the crucial factors in war termination is institutional behavior, the degree to which norm-based behavior substitutes for utilitarian calculation of national interest.³⁰ Military organizations particularly, but other organizations with national security responsibilities, as well, rely upon standard procedures, laws, codes of conduct and so forth that substitute for complex, scenario-dependent calculations. Wartime uncertainties make decision-makers even more reliant on these institutional norms. Bracken also noted that the rational decision-making process conducive to war termination can break down as national institutions disintegrate under the pressures of war. The implication for war termination is that the rational squaring of ends and means--yours and the enemy's--is usually undermined.

Other researchers have constructed behavioral models that reveal problems in war

termination decision-making. Knowing one's enemy is crucial in war, and it is especially critical in a war termination bargaining situation. Paul K. Davis has analyzed behavioral factors in war termination situations that identify a number of human proclivities for error in assessing an opponent;³¹ for example, focusing on early visualized scenarios, as Lyndon Johnson did when he continued to believe the North Vietnamese would buckle under American military pressure. In the same vein, Davis noted effects of stress on human cognition as it relates to those assessments: rigidified thinking, distrust of one's own judgment, inability to separate trivial from dangerous events, and so forth. This same behaviorist approach reveals other components of decision-making that affect war termination process, including the group dynamics of staffs and knowledge, skills and psychological attributes of key leaders or dominant staff members.

Rational Frameworks

Various methods and frameworks for thinking through war termination have been devised. Some result in impossibly complex mathematical models, others end up constructing diagrams of common sense. One of the most recent is an effort by Bruce Clarke to construct a rational model of conflict termination.³² His model addresses phases of conflict from identification of the dispute through settlement, postulating that in the "final analysis, all disputes will end through some type of political process that will result in a political accommodation that has some minimal amount of formal structure."

In a typology similar to Pillar's, he notes six types of endings: armistice, truce, cease-fire (surrenders); formal peace treaty; joint political agreement (a la Vietnam 1973); victor unilateral declaration; capitulation; and withdrawal. Clarke's model offers a framework for translating political objectives into military objectives within a conceptual environment that demands answers to questions about such matters as degree of third party involvement, public support, legal/political constraints, resource availability, national

values, views/objectives of allies, and the nature of other commitments. His ten-step analytical process is designed for a dynamic situation in which objectives and means might be changing during the course of a war, and it offers a basis for incorporating war termination planning into the military planning process.

War Fighting Strategy

War termination strategy must involve war-fighting concepts, and many of the lessons and precepts of the classical strategists are also instructive. The Clausewitzian concept of the culminating point³³ has potential as the focus of a planning framework for war termination. The culminating point is a point of equilibrium between the attack and the defense, a point at which the offensive can proceed no further without becoming relatively weaker than the defending force. The concept is certainly central to decisions on escalation, and the commander envisioning a negotiated settlement might well use the concept as a basis for planning war termination. Negotiations are unlikely to commence before the course of the war has become fairly clear, and an opponent who views the war situation favorably is more likely to be interested in negotiation than one who believes he is temporarily at a disadvantage.³⁴ The culminating point might be the time both sides are ready to negotiate.

Liddell Hart was particularly concerned about the effects of military action on war termination. In *Strategy* he provided insights into the psychology and pathology of states engaged in war with a view toward diminishing adverse consequences--including an unsatisfactory peace. His advocacy of an indirect approach rested not only on the desire to limit destructive stalemates, but also on the premise that less destructive approaches result in less resistance to war termination.³⁵

A concept similar to the culminating point has been used to study "when" wars should end. In case studies of several wars, two points are established: a "predict

point," when an objective observer (at least in retrospect) can see that one side or the other will prevail, and a "quit point," when the losing belligerent decides to cease hostilities.³⁶ During the time elapsing between these points, both belligerents are enduring unnecessary losses; it would be in the interest of both to diminish that elapsed time. Insofar as some of the factors making the predict point discernible can be isolated, the concept appears to have utility for war termination planning.

War termination concepts are inextricably wound up in war fighting concepts, and the foregoing survey of concepts and approaches to thinking about war termination is far from comprehensive. It does, however, lay out some of the most important factors that should be considered in formulating questions the strategist needs to answer in planning for war termination.

These questions and their answers will not inform strategy, however, without an understanding of American attitudes that bear on the process.

Mindset is an Impediment

As we have seen, looking at the differences between Vietnam and the Gulf War, and back to World War II, it has been easy for some to conclude that the experience of the Cold War was unique in the sense that some of the constraints limiting the use of American strength in Korea and Vietnam have now passed into history. Indeed, the military strategists who planned and executed the Gulf War sought to avoid the errors that led to problems in Korea and Vietnam, and it would be easy to surmise that the lesson of the Gulf War is that military strategy should be given wide bounds within broad political objectives. There is a danger, however, that the success of the Gulf War will only reinforce the traditional American view of war and lead to similar failures in the future.

Despite the enjoinder in US operational doctrine to include war termination

strategies in the planning process, several obstacles inhibit constructive American thinking about limited war and alternative war termination possibilities. Certainly, the relatively recent unhappy experiences of the Korean and Vietnam wars color the views of current American strategists on limited war. Other obstacles have deeper roots. One is the limited war implication for cold-bloodedness, a concept foreign to American democratic ideals. Another is a bias introduced by the distinctive American historical experience.

The crux for American strategists and the focus of any discussion of war termination is the constant tension between the passion needed to go to war and the rational limiting of ends and means.³⁷ Objectives other than immediate defeat of enemy arms imply a cold-blooded approach to war. That is inimical to American ideals: if the objective is not important enough to employ all the force at our disposal, then it is not important enough to send our sons and daughters into mortal combat. If the passions needed to send soldiers into combat are absent, the populace will not long support the war. This drives American wartime strategy toward early defeat of enemy arms in two ways: passion itself drives effort to the maximum; the need to reach a conclusion before passions subside also drives toward maximum expenditure of effort. There are few motives for limiting the effort or aiming it at objectives which do not contribute directly to defeat of the enemy's armed forces.

Historical experience introduces a strong bias. The aforementioned notion that war termination takes care of itself derives from the American belief that war is an anomaly, a belief nurtured in the historical luxury of relative isolation and growing economic power. War, in the American experience, is quite separate from peace; for Americans, there is a distinct border between the realms of peace and war. Resort to force is a last resort, used after diplomacy has failed to secure political objectives (this American view resonates in Caspar Weinberger's 1984 speech to the National Press

Club: "Finally, the commitment of US forces to combat should be a last resort."). Once this last resort to force is decided upon, the nation--however reluctantly--enters another realm in which the principal objective is to remove the anomaly. Military objectives thus surmount all political objectives save defeating the enemy: military strategy is severed from political objectives except in the general sense that military victory ultimately permits exercise of political will. The military prosecution of war under such an approach does not have to aim at any particular peace--the definition of the peace is considered quite separately, something to be designed apart from the military prosecution of the war and implemented after cessation of hostilities. It is assumed that if America prevails on the battlefield, a better peace will automatically ensue.

Perhaps it is ironic that this view of war, deeply ingrained in American military thinking, contributed substantially to prolonging combat in Korea and Vietnam. It set up tensions and severed connections between political objectives and military strategies when America found itself engaged in wars that were somehow not amenable to a strategy that required the destruction of the enemy's armies. Its mindset--that the enemy's center of gravity is his military force--crowded out creative strategy, attributing failure to limitations on American military force alone.

The stark distinction between war and peace has made it difficult for American strategists to work on the boundaries between them. In the interest of war prevention, much thought has been devoted to the first boundary--the causes of war--but work on the problem of the second boundary has been rendered much more difficult because of this perceived distinction between the realms of war and peace and the military strategy that logically follows. The difficulty is compounded once the dogs of war are unleashed and the passions needed to prosecute the war push decisions further toward military concerns.

The Plan: Look Inward

The question of war termination strategies is not an issue of whether the nation should devote sufficient military means to achieve the chosen political objectives. It is rather a matter of effective coordination in development of objectives and strategies at the critical juncture between the political leadership and the military commander. The American approach to military strategy has tended to sever the links between military action and political objective, and American military strategy has therefore been relatively clumsy in terms of its contribution to the ensuing peace.

Present joint operational doctrine demands consideration of war termination during the planning process and provides some basis for thinking through war termination requirements.³⁸ It falls short in at least two ways. First, while it calls attention to conflict termination, the planning guidance fails to deliver any practical steps aimed to focus war-fighting on war termination short of decisive defeat of enemy arms. It also assumes political objectives are given and are immutable, at least with respect to the influence of military planning. These shortcomings could be remedied by establishing doctrine that calls for examination of the internal requirements for establishing and evolving war termination objectives and techniques.

That doctrine should require that the Commander's Estimate and military operational plans address war termination considerations in detail, both to guide wartime strategy and to serve as a basis for a dialogue between military planners and policy makers. It should also require incorporation and coordination of diplomatic measures. Finally, it should make arrangements for establishment, early in the planning process, of an iterative dialogue between policy makers and military planners aimed at reconciliation of political objectives and military strategies for war termination.

Only the most serene optimist imagines a future in which Americans are not somehow, somewhere, engaged in combat. It is more and more likely that such combat

will feature limits on both ends and means. Then the critical challenge will be to get the dialogue right between the political leadership and the military strategist. Because it is unlikely that, when war comes, political leaders will have thought through the demands of war termination strategy, conceptual thinking and contingency planning will fall to the military professionals who must plan and execute the war. If such thinking and planning is incorporated into the military planning process, war termination strategies will be available and ready for political decision makers when the call to arms is heard.

End Notes

1. United States. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Pub 3-0). Washington: Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1993
2. Joint doctrine says: "The first fundamental for employment of US joint forces is to achieve strategic aims as rapidly as possible, with the least possible loss of American lives." (Joint Pub 3-0, page II-1) American strategists have been quick to seize upon the dictum of the eighteenth century strategist Carl von Clausewitz, who said in his discussion of objectives and means in war, "To sum up: of all the possible aims in war, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces always appears as the highest." Clausewitz, Carl von. On War. Ed. and Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984 ed. 99
3. US military doctrine is somewhat ambiguous with respect to war termination. It tends to deal in terms of conflict termination, which implies solutions beyond ending the fighting. Joint Pub 0-1 defines termination objectives as "Specific objectives that define the intended manner of conflict termination and the required military and diplomatic achievements to obtain it."
4. Others have considered this too broad a definition. In And the Clock Strikes Thirteen: The Termination of War by James L. Foster and Garry D. Brewer (Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1976), the authors noted that cessation of hostilities resulting from annihilation or exhaustion of one or both sides in a war is an event that does not require a lot of thought. They define war termination as cessation of armed hostilities by political choice, short of all-out warfare.
5. Pillar, Paul R. Negotiating Peace. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983. 12, and Cimbala, Steven J. and Sidney R. Waldman, eds. Controlling and Ending Conflict. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1992. 5. Pillar used criteria from past studies as well as his own to set lower limits, excluding those conflicts that did not result in at least 1000 casualties per year.
6. Joint doctrine explains: "Since the nature of the termination will shape the futures of the contesting nations, it is fundamentally important to understand that conflict termination is an essential link between national security, security strategy, national military strategy, and post-hostility aims--the desired outcome." (Joint Pub 3-0, page I-12)
7. Joint doctrine (Joint Pub 3-0) provides broad guidance on the need to consider conflict termination in planning, but it stops short of offering any specific elements of the planning process and is unclear as to where the responsibility lies for setting termination objectives or criteria. The pertinent text is at Annex.
8. No one would expect doctrine to anticipate defeat, and it only makes sense to plan for victory. Nevertheless, a reading of Joint Pub 3-0 gives one the impression that only one outcome is possible. Little is said in US doctrine about what to do if plans go awry, and practically nothing is said about relating military actions to diplomatic undertakings.
9. Joint Pub 3-0, page I-11
10. B.H. Liddell Hart made a strong point of this in Strategy (New York: Meridian, 1991). Joint doctrine also makes this point: "National military strategy attempts to promote peace, deter aggression, and, failing that, fight and win. But in the larger context, defeating an enemy military force is rarely sufficient, in and of itself, to ensure a long-term solution to a crisis. Properly conceived conflict termination criteria are key to ensuring that victories achieved with military force endure." (Joint Pub 3-0, page I-11)

11. Pillar 26-30
12. Joint Pub 3-0 provides broad guidance, but it is interesting to note that the planning documents required by joint doctrine do not include sections on war termination criteria or objectives, nor does the The Joint Staff Officer's Guide (AFSC Pub 1), the key working document for military strategy planning, offer any guidance on how to deal with war termination.
13. Joint doctrine suggests: "Knowing when to terminate military operations and how to preserve achieved advantages is a component of strategy and operational art. Before forces are committed, Joint Force Commanders must know how the National Command Authorities intend to terminate the operation and ensure its outcomes endure, and then determine how to implement that strategic design at the operational level." (Joint Pub 3-0, page I-30)
14. Clausewitz noted the importance of this juncture: "If war is to be fully consonant with political objectives, and policy suited to the means available for war, then unless the statesman and soldier are combined in one person, the only sound expedient is to make the commander-in-chief a member of the cabinet, so that the cabinet can share in in the major aspects of his activities." Clausewitz 608
15. The advent of nuclear weapons had a curiously paradoxical effect. It raised the stakes of conflict so high that concepts of limiting war--rationally stopping the fighting before exhaustion or annihilation--had to be contemplated. Yet strategies of nuclear deterrence, together with the superpower stalemate, depended upon the opposite--the threat of overwhelming force.
16. Weinberger, Caspar W. Remarks to the National Press Club, November 28, 1984. Washington, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs), 1984
17. Huntington, Samuel P. "American Military Strategy" in Policy Papers in International Affairs, Number 28, pp. 3-17. Institute of International Studies, 1986.
18. See Clausewitz, 579-602. Clausewitz distinguishes between this "ideal" form and limited war, in which political objectives and military measures must be adjusted. American strategists, however, have tended to favor the ideal and have seized on his dictum that "...of all the possible aims in war, the destruction of the enemy's armed forces always appears as the highest." 99. A closer reading of Clausewitz reveals a number of other ways to reach the political objectives of war.
19. Clausewitz notes this factor in his explanation of the political object of war. 81
20. Cimbala in Cimbala 1-39
21. Pillar 11-30
22. Clausewitz 81
23. This is recognized in joint doctrine. Joint Pub 3-0 notes: "Wars fought in the name of ideology, ethnicity, or religious or cultural primacy tend to be value-based and reflect demands that are seldom negotiable." (Joint Pub 3-0, page III-30)
24. Clausewitz 579
25. Ikle, Fred C., Every War Must End. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971
26. Foster, James L. and Garry D. Brewer. And the Clock Strikes Thirteen: The Termination of War. Santa Monica: The RAND Corporation, 1976 9
27. Pillar 26-28
28. Liddell Hart 356
29. Pillar 145
30. Cimbala 183-195
31. Cimbala 165-182
32. Clarke, Bruce B.G. Conflict Termination: A Rational Model. Carlyle Barracks, PA, US Army War College, 1992.
33. Clausewitz 566-573
34. Pillar 246

35. See especially his treatment of grand strategy in *Strategy*, pages 356-360.
36. Hammerman, Gay M. Conventional Attrition and Battle Termination Criteria. Washington, DC: Defense Nuclear Agency, DNA-TR-81-224, 1982. 13
37. This point was made eloquently by Colonel Harry Summers in his excellent treatise on US strategy in the Vietnam War. Summers, Harry G., Jr. On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context. Carlisle Barracks, PA: US Army War College, 1981 7-12
38. Joint Pub 3-0; pertinent excerpts at Annex.

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ANNEX

Excerpts from Joint Pub 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations

**Pages I-11 through 1-13
Pages III-30 through III-32**