NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

CONFLICT TERMINATION – CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

by

Jeffrey E. Fondaw
Colonel, USMC

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

16 May 2001

Report Documentation Page

Report Date	Report Type	Dates Covered (from... to)
16052001	N/A	-

Title and Subtitle Conflict Termination - Considerations for the Operational Commander	**Contract Number**
	Grant Number
	Program Element Number
Author(s) Fondaw, Jeffrey E.	**Project Number**
	Task Number
	Work Unit Number
Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es) Naval War College 686 Cushing Road Newport, RI 02841-1207	**Performing Organization Report Number**
Sponsoring/Monitoring Agency Name(s) and Address(es)	**Sponsor/Monitor's Acronym(s)**
	Sponsor/Monitor's Report Number(s)
Distribution/Availability Statement Approved for public release, distribution unlimited	
Supplementary Notes	
Abstract	
Subject Terms	
Report Classification unclassified	**Classification of this page** unclassified
Classification of Abstract unclassified	**Limitation of Abstract** UU
Number of Pages 23	

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. Report Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

2. Security Classification Authority:

3. Declassification/Downgrading Schedule:

4. Distribution/Availability of Report: DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE; DISTRIBUTION IS UNLIMITED.

5. Name of Performing Organization:
JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

6. Office Symbol:	**7. Address**: NAVAL WAR COLLEGE 686 CUSHING ROAD NEWPORT, RI 02841-1207
C	

8. Title (Include Security Classification): CONFLICT TERMINATION – CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

9. Personal Authors: Colonel Jeffrey E. Fondaw, USMC

10.Type of Report: FINAL	**11. Date of Report**: 16 May, 2001

12.Page Count: 19

13.Supplementary Notation: A paper submitted to the Faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC or the Department of the Navy.

14. Ten key words that relate to your paper:

Conflict Termination, End State, Gulf War, Strategy to Policy Match, Stable Peace, National Strategic Objectives, Operational Objectives

15.Abstract:

A review of many of our recent past conflicts provides evidence that while the need for careful administration of conflict termination may have been understood its execution has not been well managed.

Failures in conflict termination at the operational level arise primarily from two essential components of the conflict termination process. These two components, which exist principally at the national strategic level, are the formulation of the national objectives and the establishment of conditions under which a stable peace will be achieved. In essence, for the operational commander, conflict termination is merely the translation of these two components into a military end state. While closely interrelated these two fundamental components of conflict termination must be evaluated separately and well understood by the operational commander in order to avoid critical pitfalls of a badly conceived and poorly supported termination strategy.

While the decision to initiate and terminate a war is always a political decision and resides at the highest national command level, successful conflict termination is inextricably linked with conditions on the battlefield established by the operational commander. Although operational commanders do not make policy their actions can critically impact the success or failure of those policies. The operational commander must establish an end state to support the political aim and be able to explain, both to superiors and subordinates, how his vision of that end state is critical to the conflict termination process.

16.Distribution / Availability of Abstract:	**Unclassified**	**Same As Rpt**	**DTIC Users**
	X		

17.Abstract Security Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

18.Name of Responsible Individual: CHAIRMAN, JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

19.Telephone: 841-6461	**20.Office Symbol:** **C**

Security Classification of This Page Unclassified

Abstract of

CONFLICT TERMINATION – CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE OPERATIONAL COMMANDER

A review of many of our recent past conflicts provides evidence that while the need for careful administration of conflict termination may have been understood, its execution has not been well managed.

Failures in conflict termination at the operational level arise primarily from two essential components of the conflict termination process. These two components, which exist principally at the national strategic level, are the formulation of the national objectives and the establishment of conditions under which a stable peace will be achieved. In essence, for the operational commander, conflict termination is merely the translation of these two components into a military end state. While closely interrelated, these two fundamental components of conflict termination must be evaluated separately and well understood by the operational commander in order to avoid critical pitfalls of a badly conceived and poorly supported termination strategy.

While the decision to initiate and terminate a war is always a political decision and resides at the highest national command level, successful conflict termination is inextricably linked with conditions on the battlefield established by the operational commander. Although operational commanders do not make policy their actions can critically impact the success or failure of those policies. The operational commander must establish an end state to support the political aim and be able to explain, both to superiors and subordinates, how his vision of that end state is critical to the conflict termination process.

Conflict Termination – Considerations for the Operational Commander

Joint Pub 3-0 states "properly conceived conflict termination criteria are key to ensuring that victories achieved with military forces endure."[1] A review of our recent past conflicts provides evidence that while the need for careful administration of conflict termination may have been understood, its execution has not been well managed.

Failures in conflict termination at the operational level arise primarily from two essential components of the conflict termination process. These two components, which originate principally at the national strategic level, are the formulation of the national objectives and the establishment of conditions under which a stable peace will be achieved. Very simplistically, the national objectives form the "why" of the conflict, while the conditions necessary to establish a stable peace constitute much of the "how," especially in the termination process. In essence, for the operational commander, conflict termination is merely the translation of these two components into a military end state. While closely interrelated these two fundamental components of conflict termination must be evaluated separately and well understood by the operational commander in order to avoid critical pitfalls of a badly conceived and poorly supported termination strategy.

The subject of war or conflict termination is not a comfortable topic for military planners nor is much doctrinal guidance available to assist the operational commander in consideration of the subject.[2] Many of the doctrinal reference publications that address the issue from an operational standpoint are brief in their comments. Joint Pub 3-0, in chapters I and III, provides the operational commander some guidance on the necessity to plan for conflict termination but approaches the subject with a fairly broad brush. The Army's

---

[1] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: JCS 1995), I-9.
[2] For purposes of this paper war termination and conflict termination are considered synonymous terms.

planning manual, FM 100-5, offers just a few brief paragraphs on the topic, advising, "Before the first shot is fired the theater commander must have a clear sense of what he needs to see in order to know that his operation (and hence, the conflict) can end . . . ."[3] Regrettably, arriving at this "clear sense" in our recent past has been difficult.

Aside from doctrinal publications much of the work dealing with conflict termination addresses the subject at the strategic vice operational level. These works focus on policy-making and the decision making process at the highest levels of government. Fred Ikle's book "Every War Must End" is a classic example, as is "Conflict Termination and Military Strategy," edited by Stephan Cimbala. There is a good reason for this high level focus. The decision to initiate and terminate a war is always a political decision and resides at the highest national command level. However, successful conflict termination, and ultimately peace-making, at the national command level is inextricably linked with conditions on the battlefield established by the operational commander. Although operational commanders do not make policy, their actions and the actions of their subordinates can critically impact the success or failure of those policies.

Contributing further to the military's discomfort is the fact that conflict termination exists in that netherworld between military art and diplomatic statecraft. And, as any military strategist knows, the boundaries between two forces always present an area of vulnerability. It is no different with the boundary between conflict and peace.

Before proceeding further with the examination of the essential components of the conflict termination process a review of terminology and concepts will be helpful. For instance, exactly what is conflict termination and why is this process so complex?

---

[3] Department of the Army, Operations FM 100-5, (June 1993), 6-23.

Michael Handel relates war termination closely to the Clausewitzian concept of the culminating point of victory; "At the culminating point of victory, the victor has gone as far as he can without risking a possible reversal of fortune and attained the strongest possible position relative to his opponent: now he must consider the issue of war termination – how to consolidate his gains on the battlefield into enduring political results" (emphasis mine).[4] James Reed views war termination as a process, containing both military and political components, which serves "as the bridge over which armed conflict transitions into more peaceful forms of interaction."[5] Bruce Bade has offered an excellent definition of war termination, which he described as "the process of deciding when and how to stop fighting when it becomes evident that war fighting objectives have been met or, are no longer achievable."[6]

These latter two definitions are important since termination is defined not as an event but as a process. Too often our "American way of war"[7] has made paramount the process of victory, the focus on the means of war and war-fighting planning, with the expectation that the end of fighting would be brought about by a decisive military defeat of the enemy.[8] As Stephen Cimbala relates, "Traditional military thinking regards discussion of war termination as a 'cop out' from seeking something more honorable: victory."[9] To paraphrase General MacArthur, conflict termination is no substitute for victory. Viewed through this lens, war

[4] Michael J.Handel, War Termination – A Critical Survey. (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University 1978), 185.
[5] James W. Reed, "Should Deterrence Fail: War Termination in Campaign Planning," Parameters, (Summer 1993): 42.
[6] Bruce C Bade, "War Termination: Why Don't We Plan For It," in Essays on Strategy XII, ed. John N. Petrie (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1994), 207.
[7] This term refers to the argument made by Russell Weigley in his work, The American Way of War, that the American way of war, at least through the first half of the Twentieth Century, was based on a strategy of annihilation. Military strategists thought in unlimited war terms and focused solely on the destruction of the enemy's armed forces.
[8] Fred Charles Ikle, Every War Must End (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 1; Bade, 208.

termination was a product that naturally followed victory and not necessarily considered a process unto itself. Within the realm of an unlimited war, with its possibility of unconditional surrender, this conceptual framework may still work. In a limited conflict, such as most of those fought by the United States since WWII, this framework fails miserably as it attempts to cope with the complexity of conflict termination.[10]

The process of war termination sounds deceptively simple. The national level policy makers through the process of initiating the conflict establish national objectives to be achieved and the strategic desired end state. Joint Pub 3-0 defines end state as ". . . the set of required conditions that achieve the strategic objectives."[11] From these national objectives and desired strategic end state the operational commander, with due consideration for ways and means, must derive operational objectives and determine a military end state which will directly translate into achievement of the political aim. This is the heart of operational design. This simple, rational process in concept can be fraught with complexity in execution. This complexity is a key ingredient to the causation of failed conflict termination.

Why is this so? One reason is the fact that decisions at the national level are not entirely rational and policy decisions are necessarily "political." Rational and non-rational factors intrude into the strategic decision to initiate and to terminate any conflict.

---

[9] Stephen J. Cimbala, "The Endgame and War, Conflict Termination and Military Strategy," in Conflict Termination and Military Strategy, eds. Stephen J Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 5.

[10] I am using the concept of limited and unlimited war as defined by Clausewitz. He states "War can be of two kinds, in the sense that either the objective is to overthrow the enemy - to render him politically helpless or militarily impotent, thus forcing him to sign whatever peace we please; or merely to occupy some of his frontier-districts so that we can annex them or use them for bargaining at the peace negotiations" (Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret [Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1984], 69). In this context the emphasis is on the objective of the war and not the means. For instance, the Vietnam War was a "limited" war for the United States against North Vietnam; we had no wish to overthrow their government and occupy their territory. North Vietnam was fighting a "limited" war against the United States since they had not the means or intent of overthrowing our nation, but against South Vietnam they were conducting an "unlimited" war.

[11] Joint Publication 3-0, III-2.

Expectations based on imperfect knowledge and sometimes, unsound assumptions, compounded by internal and external pressures, combine with the character and personalities of national leaders to make the idea of a perfectly rational process impossible.[12] It is this potential lack of rationality at the strategic level that makes the operational commander's task so difficult. He must translate the sometimes non-rational desires of the national policy makers into rational, achievable, operational objectives on the battlefield.

Secondly, the political nature of the decision making process does not often lend itself to producing an end state devoid of ambiguity. Our political process often rewards decision makers for ambiguity that translates, for them, into political maneuver room but lends little to the resolution of the operational commander's dilemma of translating strategic ends into military objectives.[13]

With this understanding of the ambiguous and complex nature of conflict termination established, we can consider what constitutes "successful" termination. This consideration will naturally lead us to an examination of one of the two essential components of conflict termination – the establishment of strategic peace-making conditions.

The obvious answer to what constitutes "successful" termination is a conclusion that secures the political aims. Joint Pub 3-0 states "wars are only successful when political aims are achieved and these aims endure**"** (emphasis mine).[14] In addition to achieving the stated political aim, or national objectives, it seems obvious that for war termination to be truly successful, and potentially enduring, it should embody one or more of the following strategic conditions: (1) remove the losing side's will to overturn the peace, (2) to remove his

[12] Handel, 29-32.
[13] Keith A. Dunn, "The Missing Link in Conflict Termination Thought," in Conflict Termination and Military Strategy, eds. Stephen J Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987), 187; Bade, 217.
[14] Joint Publication 3-0, III-23

capability to overturn the peace, and/or (3) retain the capability and will to enforce the peace.[15] The requirement that successful conflict termination must lead to an enduring result demands deliberation of these conditions at both the strategic and operational level.

While these conditions are mainly strategic considerations they should be kept in mind as the operational commander and his staff prepare for conflict termination. Joint Pub 3-0 states "JFCs [Joint Force Commanders] must know how the NCA intend to terminate the operation and ensure its outcomes endure . . . ."(emphasis mine).[16] The choice of one or more of these conditions at the strategic level must contribute directly to the operational level plan for termination. It should significantly color the choice of operational objectives, the military end state, and planning for the post-hostility phase. These strategic conditions are also linked intricately with the nature of the war, whether it is limited or unlimited. While thoughtful selection of a strategic condition for establishing a stable peace should occur at the national strategic level, and may sometimes be spelled out in the national strategic objectives, the ambiguity that haunts the political nature of this process often precludes such frank consideration. Each of these conditions will be explored in greater detail below.

The first strategic condition, removing the opponent's will to overturn the peace is both physical and psychological in nature. This is the most complicated of the three conditions to establish. Its difficulty can be exacerbated by demands of the victors that are perceived as too onerous or dishonorable, a failure to convince the government and/or population of the defeated nation that they lost and/or a failure to discredit the political leadership of the war with the consequences of the defeat. Achieving this condition may sometimes require removing the opposing regime. Again, while these considerations lie

[15] Brad Lee, "Retrospect and Prospect: Warfighting Themes," Lecture, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1 March 2001

mostly in the realm of the strategic peace-making process, it is of consequence to the operational commander in terms of the amount of leverage for which he should plan to ensure the success of this process.

The concept of leverage is closely associated with the population's or government's psychological and/or physical perception of defeat. Joint Pub 3-0 states, "the strategic aims for which the United States fought should be secured by the leverage that US and multinational forces gained and maintain" (emphasis mine).[17] Although not defining it specifically as leverage, this same document states that "negotiating power," necessary in a limited conflict, "springs from two sources: military success and military potential."[18]

Consequently, a lack of leverage is a direct result of insufficient military or political force with which to affect the opponent's will – often arising from a failure to go far enough militarily. This most often occurs within the bounds of a limited war, although it can also be problematic in an unlimited war. Conversely, sufficient leverage would result from securing critical assets of the enemy, geographical, economic, political, etc., or the maintenance of sufficient military potential to do so, thereby ensuring the successful and enduring accomplishment of desired end states. Leverage is important in varying degrees in achieving all three strategic conditions.

The second strategic condition, removing the opponent's capability to overturn the peace, has differing ramifications for the operational commander based on the nature of the war. In an unlimited war, overrunning the enemy's homeland, destroying his war making capacity and leaving occupying forces to ensure compliance may accomplish this condition. Clausewitz defined the objective of an unlimited war as follows, "To overthrow the enemy –

[16] Joint Publication 3-0, III-22.
[17] Ibid, III-23.

to render him politically helpless or militarily impotent, thus forcing him to sign whatever peace we please."[19] Thus, in an unlimited conflict, the termination process becomes greatly simplified. Handel clarifies this more by stating, "War termination in the unlimited war is a unilateral affair, not a reciprocal process of accommodation."[20]

In a limited war the establishment of this condition can be more problematic. Unlike an unlimited war, in which the enemy has been rendered helpless, within the scope of a limited conflict it is up to one's opponent to decide when he has been defeated. Because of the nature of limited conflict the enemy can temporarily acquiesce, withdraw from the battlefield, and thereby retain the capability to renew the conflict at a time of his own choosing. Under such circumstances consideration of the requirement to remove the opponent's capability to overturn the peace has definite operational imperatives for a commander. For instance, this might drive the military end state to encompass the destruction of a certain quantifiable amount of military capability of the enemy to ensure he does not retain the ability to renew the conflict, the occupation of a buffer zone, and/or the creation of a demilitarized zone.

The third strategic condition, retaining the capability and will to enforce the peace, should also have a compelling effect on the operational commander's execution planning and conflict termination considerations. This effect can be seen through decisions on such factors as where should his forces halt or be positioned for the post-hostilities phase and how much military potential or leverage he needs to retain. Both these factors can be affected by how successful the destruction of the opponent's military potential has been. The strategic

---

[18] Ibid, I-9.
[19] Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press 1984), 69.
[20] Handel, 196.

guidance for how robust this leverage must be or how much military potential is projected to remain deployed to enforce the peace should heavily flavor the military end state

As described above it is easy to see how the choice of one or more of these strategic conditions at the national command level will impact an operational commander's plans. It is equally important that he understand how the other elements of national power will help achieve this chosen condition. Without this understanding the operational commander can never hope to integrate his vision of military end state with that of the national policy makers and those other elements of power. For instance, will economic sanctions be part of the strategic peace-making condition that is envisioned by the policy makers? If so, how does military potential increase the leverage this element of power can bring to bear against the opponent. Without a clear understanding of this environment the operational commander and his planners can fail to properly integrate the military element of power.

With this understanding of the first essential component of conflict termination established, the second, the formulation of the national strategic objectives and their subsequent translation into a military end state, can be examined. While the determination of national objectives is the function of the national policy makers it is critical that the operational commander understands explicitly how his military end state contributes to the accomplishment of these objectives. A potential pitfall leading to failed conflict termination is caused by a poor translation of the national objectives or desired strategic end state to a corresponding military end state.

Contributing to this pitfall, as with the entire process of conflict termination, is the politically colored, sometime irrational, and often ambiguous, nature of strategic guidance contained within and surrounding the national objectives. This can result in one of the

following dilemmas for an operational commander: (1) a strategic objective that does not, or can not, translate into an achievable military end state, (2) a failure to re-evaluate operational end state and war termination conditions in light of a changing military situation or national objective, (3) a failure to obtain, misunderstand the need for, or even consider the retention of sufficient military leverage to achieve the desired end state and, (4) a stated or implied unlimited political objective expressed within the strategic framework of a limited war.

The friction generated between the formulation of national strategic objectives and the creation of a military end state to support those objectives, as interpreted through the "fog of war," can haunt an operational commander and his staff and easily lead to a less than favorable conclusion of a conflict. To make this perplexing situation even worse, the dilemmas listed above will invariably be exacerbated by a failure to give careful consideration to, and obtain a complete understanding of, the first component of conflict termination – the strategic condition for a stable peace.

Examples of the failure to adequately consider these two essential components of conflict termination are evident in many of our conflicts. Vietnam, Lebanon, Panama (Just Cause), and Kosovo (Allied Force) would all provide sufficient grist for any case study of this topic. Perhaps the Gulf War, our most recent major regional conflict, provides the most dramatic and potentially unique example of conflict termination gone awry. It is unique in that we won with overwhelming force and therefore should have been rewarded with a successful termination of the conflict. The fact that this well planned and well executed operation was less than successful in this aspect is in retrospect quite significant and bears examination.

It is very hard for the military to consider the Gulf War a failure, but in the larger political sense it was just that. If war is truly just a continuation of politics, albeit a very expensive continuation, it should result in the attainment of a political objective measurably better than that achievable by politics alone. In many respects the Gulf war stands astride the chasm of what constitutes successful war making and failed conflict termination. The battlefield success and overwhelming victory achieved by coalition forces in Desert Storm were not translated into a successful and enduring termination of this conflict. This failure can be directly attributed to a lack of consideration of the two essential components of successful conflict termination: understanding the strategic condition for establishing a stable peace, and ensuring a national objective to military end state correlation.

For Desert Storm, General Schwarzkopf and his staff developed a set of operational military objectives, which in their estimate would achieve the strategic desired end state. In many respects these operational objectives did just that. A review of the national objectives and their direct or indirect relationship to specific operational objectives is contained in the table below:

US National Policy Objectives[21]	CINCENT Operational Objectives [22]	
	Direct Effect	***Indirect Effect***
Immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait	-Attack Iraqi political-military leadership and C2 -Gain and maintain air superiority -Sever Iraqi supply lines -Destroy Republican Guard forces in the KTO [Kuwait Theater of Operations]	
Restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government	-Liberate Kuwait City -Destroy Republican Guard forces in the KTO	-Sever Iraqi supply lines
Security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf		-Destroy known nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) production, storage and delivery capabilities -Destroy Republican Guard forces in the KTO

[21] Department of Defense, Conduct of the Persian Gulf War (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1992), 38.
[22] Ibid, 96-7.

Safety and protection of the lives of American citizens abroad		

Unfortunately, the national objective of security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf did not easily translate into an operational objective. The review above of the operational objectives fails to reveal any single objective or combination of objectives that would achieve this national aim. There was definitely an indirect relationship between the destruction of Iraq's NBC capabilities and the destruction of the Republican Guard in the KTO and this objective if we infer that destruction of this military potential would lead to a more stable Gulf.

While it might be argued that the strategic objective of Gulf stability may be dependent on other elements of national power, this was never clear in the minds of the operational planners. In the "mother of all briefings" General Schwarzkopf announced, "we've accomplished our mission."[23] Indeed they had. Unfortunately accomplishing the mission had little impact on the achievement of the desired strategic end state. Without a complete understanding of the first essential component of conflict termination, of how the policy makers were to achieve a stable peace, and the second, how the military end state related to the national objectives, it was difficult, if not impossible, for the operational planners to integrate their military strategy with this aim.

In retrospect, as will be seen below, we failed to ensure that even the operational objective of destroying the Republican Guard was accomplished. If the removal of the Republican Guard, the basis for much of Saddam's power, was necessary to ensure the stability of the Gulf, the objective should have been worded "destroy Republican Guard forces to a certain level," not just those in the KTO. Similarly, if destruction of Iraq's NBC

[23] George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, A World Transformed (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1998), 485.

capability was necessary for security of the region, we failed to establish sufficient leverage through military action to ensure this was accomplished. As a result, conflict termination of the Gulf War was flawed by the failure to consider the relationship of the national objective to ensure the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf to a specific military end state.

Changing national objectives and/or a changing military situation can also affect the operational commander's plans for conflict termination. While the national objectives in the case of the Gulf War did not change, the military situation at the close of the war was significantly different from that envisioned at the beginning of the ground war. Operational commanders should plan for conflict termination at the onset of operational planning and frequently reassess those plans in recognition of an ever-changing situation, both on the battlefield and within the beltway. Failure to do so will result in a squandering of national resources and a military conclusion that fails to achieve the strategic objective.

The rapidity of the apparent conclusion of the ground war caught both strategic and operational level players by surprise. This exacerbated the lack of coherent war termination planning. Once the decision to end the ground conflict was proposed, the operational commander failed to challenge this course of action even though one of the operational level objectives had not been achieved.[24] The success and speed of the Marine drive into Kuwait and the rapid withdrawal of the Republican Guard had thrown off the timing of the ground maneuver. The early decision to end the ground operation eliminated the opportunity to destroy this Iraqi military potential.[25] The operational commander, Schwarzkopf, without a well thought out plan of how to terminate the conflict, especially in light of the rapidly

[24] Gordon and Trainor, The Generals War (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 422-3.
[25] Ibid, 417-424.

changing ground situation, failed to stand up to Powell, Cheney and the White House to delay the cease-fire in order to achieve the required level of destruction necessary to support the strategic objectives.[26]

A conflict termination strategy with explicit linkage between military end state and national objectives would have provided the commander with a foundation upon which to evaluate the changed situation. Unfortunately no such foundation existed. According to Gordon Brown, CENTCOM chief foreign policy advisor, "we never did have a plan to terminate the war."[27]

The impact of the decision to end the ground offensive had severe ramifications. Saddam still had sufficient ground forces to threaten his neighbors, making achievement of the strategic objective of Gulf security and stability problematic. Just as importantly, with regard to the "implied objective" discussed below, Saddam retained more than enough force to ensure he remained in power.

The sudden end of the ground war also contributed to the failure to consider the issue of "leverage" which is so important in concluding a "limited' conflict. The question of how a stable peace was to be achieved, and how leverage would play a part in this peace, was never answered. Subsequently, at the conclusion of the ground offensive during the Gulf War there was a failure to obtain, or even consider the retention of, sufficient military leverage to achieve the desired end state. This lack of leverage meant that the United States was left without an adequate enforcement mechanism to ensure a stable peace.

[26] Ibid, 432.
[27] Ibid, 461

Joint Pub 3.0 states "US forces must be dominant in the final stages of an armed conflict by achieving the leverage sufficient to impose a lasting solution."[28] Unfortunately, military dominance does not automatically equal satisfactory conflict termination in isolation of what that dominance and resulting leverage are to achieve. There is no question that U.S. and coalition forces were dominant at the conclusion of hostilities in the Gulf War. There also seems to be little question that the United States and the coalition failed to establish the necessary leverage to ensure that dominance was maintained and conditions for a stable peace established.

Just prior to the cease-fire General Schwarzkopf announced that coalition forces would not proceed to Baghdad.[29] Whether intended or not, this inadvertently removed a measure of leverage that could be brought to bear against the Saddam Hussein regime. As discussed below, the issue of whether this was or was not an objective was awkward. More important to the overall issue of leverage were the decisions made by General Schwarzkopf in negotiating the cease-fire.

During the cease-fire negotiations General Schwarzkopf assured the Iraqi negotiators that all coalition forces would withdraw from Iraq "as rapidly as we can get them out." This seemingly innocent remark cost the coalition any geographic or economic leverage they had gained by their military dominance. Any hold of potential key economic areas, such as the Rumaila oilfield, which could have enforced a strategic peace-making condition (had one been known) was forfeited.[30]

Finally, the Gulf War provides an example of perhaps the worst dilemma a commander can be presented with - fighting a limited war for an unlimited objective. This

[28] Joint Publication 3-0, I-9.
[29] Gordon and Trainor, 418.

invariably creates a strategy to policy mismatch and ensures failure of conflict termination. While the Gulf War was limited in every sense, the problem of correlating military end state to national objectives was compounded by the existence of an "implied" unlimited objective. There was no publicly stated objective to remove Saddam's regime. Unfortunately, President Bush's frequent comparison of Saddam Hussein to Hitler led to speculation that an implied objective of the Gulf War was the elimination of Saddam.[31]

There is proof that this implied end state, while not publicly endorsed, was nonetheless sought at the strategic level. As the National Security Advisor, Brent Scrowcroft, relates, "We began to assume, that dealing Saddam another battlefield defeat would shatter what support he had within the military, which probably would then topple him."[32] A limited war with an implied, or assumed "unlimited" objective, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, presented the operational commander, whether he acknowledged it or not, with an unsolvable predicament.

Again, a clear understanding, or even better, a statement, of the strategic condition for establishment of an enduring peace would have helped clarify the situation. Was Saddam Hussein and his regime a part of that condition or not? If so, comparisons to Hitler and the "hope" that he might not survive defeat compromised this aim and clouded the operational commander's ability to create a supporting end state on the ground. Just prior to the ground offensive President Bush related that he worried that Saddam "would emerge from the war weakened but as a 'hero' still in charge."[33] In retrospect this is exactly what did happen.

---

[30] Ibid, 447.
[31] Bush and Scowcroft, 340, 374, 388.
[32] Ibid, 433.
[33] Ibid, 463.

Gordon and Trainor comment in their book The Generals War that, "The decision to end the war was determined more by political than military considerations."[34] While this may be true, it is probably more correct to state that the war was ended without any thought for how the military end state would or should support the strategic condition for ensuring a stable peace. James Reed provides this additional amplification:

> As in Korea, Vietnam, and the more recent Persian Gulf conflict, war termination becomes a contest in which political leverage borne of battlefield success is the dominant theme. This may at times require planners to define operational objectives that exceed bottom-line political objectives in order to gain leverage that will promote expeditious termination of hostilities and the effective transition to a post-hostilities phase.[35]

It is important to add that planners will only define these "excessive" operational objectives when they have a clear understanding of the role of these objectives, and the corresponding military end state, in securing a better peace.

In the foregoing review of the termination of the Gulf War we must remember the Joint Pub 3-0 admonition that wars are only successful when political aims are achieved and they endure. If one of our strategic objectives was to ensure a secure and stable Gulf region we must ask whether the Persian Gulf is more stable now than it was ten years ago. The answer is arguable. Saddam continues his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. Economic sanctions have become a diplomatic embarrassment. Military operations to pressure Saddam continue but are increasingly seen as ineffectual and awkward to justify. The Gulf coalition, so brilliantly established by President Bush and his diplomatic team, exists only in name with little real backing from any state except Great Britain. The United States is engaged in a long-term military operation that exacerbates our military overreach

[34] Gordon and Trainor, 439.
[35] Reed, 49.

and contributes to a near unsustainable level of operations. What is clear is that for all the sacrifice in national treasure the U.S. and coalition forces should have achieved a "better" peace.

As the brief examination of conflict termination at the conclusion of the Gulf War demonstrates, Joint Force Commanders, even at the CINC level, can fail to appreciate the chameleon-like nature of war termination and the ramifications that tactical actions can have on the resulting strategic end state and achieving enduring political goals.

Strategic guidance and policy on objectives and peace-making conditions will never be complete, clear, rational, or free of ambiguity. Understanding this is the first step in creating an effective conflict termination strategy. Although conflict termination is ultimately a political process the operational commander must establish an end state to support the political aim and be able to explain, both to superiors and subordinates, how his vision of that end state is critical to the conflict termination process and establishment of an enduring peace. The recommendations below, while not a checklist, should be considered by operational planners to ensure that the essential components of successful conflict termination are well thought-out and integrated into any termination strategy:

1. Understand the strategic condition for establishing a stable peace – how will the NCA ensure an enduring result to the conflict? Is this condition contained explicitly within the strategic objectives or stated elsewhere? If not, can it be implicitly determined? Determine how the other elements of national power integrate into establishing this condition. Then ensure that the operational objectives and military end state accurately reflect that conceptual approach.

2. Link operational objectives directly to national objectives/end state. If a national objective has no direct military relationship seek further strategic guidance. Are there military objectives that will indirectly affect this national objective? Are there other elements of national power that will accomplish this objective? If so, how can military end states be constructed to properly support these other elements? What sort of leverage is necessary to ensure their success?

3. Review the envisioned conflict termination criteria and the military end state as the military and political situation changes. Do they need revision? Do they still make sense in relationship to the national objectives and the strategic condition for termination and peace-making? Have these changes had an effect on other elements of national power that are instrumental to conflict termination?

As Clausewitz is often quoted, "In war the result is never final . . . . The defeated state often considers the outcome merely as a transitory evil, for which a remedy may be found in political considerations at some later date."[36] To ensure that the defeated state does not consider the peace only a "transitory evil," and conflict termination produces an enduring result, national strategic policy makers must remain cognizant of the long-range consequences of the peace process and operational decision makers must have a clear understanding of how their military end state will support that process.

[36] Clausewitz, 80.

Bibliography

Bade, Bruce C. "War Termination: Why Don't We Plan For It." In Essays on Strategy XII, ed. John N. Petrie, 205 – 231. Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1994.

Bush, George, and Brent Scowcroft. A World Transformed. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1998.

Cimbala, Stephen J. "The Endgame and War." In Conflict Termination and Military Strategy, edited by Stephen J. Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn, 1-12. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987.

Clausewitz, Carl von. On War, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Dunn, Keith A. "The Missing Link in Conflict Termination Thought." In Conflict Termination and Military Strategy, edited by Stephen J. Cimbala and Keith A. Dunn, 175-193. Boulder: Westview Press, 1987.

Gordon, Michael R., and Bernard E. Trainor. The Generals War. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.

Handel, Michael J. War Termination – A Critical Survey. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1978.

Headquarters, Department of the Army. Operations. FM 100-5. June 1993.

Ikle, Fred Charles. Every War Must End. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.

Lee, Brad. "Retrospect and Prospect: Warfighting Themes." Lecture. U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1 March 2001.

Reed, James W. "Should Deterrence Fail: War Termination in Campaign Planning." Parameters (Summer 1993): 41-52.

U.S. Department of Defense. Conduct of the Persian Gulf War. Washington, D.C.:GPO, 1992.

U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Doctrine for Joint Operations. Joint Publication 3-0. Washington, D.C.: JCS, 1 February 1995.