



Surrender aboard
USS Missouri in
Tokyo Bay.

Operational Planning and Conflict Termination

By JOHN R. BOULÉ II

Although the Armed Forces have proven themselves a capable policy instrument, the Nation has always struggled with conflict termination. America has often prevailed militarily while failing to achieve policy goals quickly and efficiently. A scan of joint publications suggests that military

professionals embrace the idea of a termination strategy, but doctrine offers little practical help. It is time to take the next step, creating an interagency organization and practices that can effectively conduct termination planning. Each regional commander in chief (CINC) should have a standing interagency team to act as an operations transition planning cell. This element must include members well versed in the application of the military, diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments of national power.

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Report Documentation Page

Report Date 00 00 2002	Report Type N/A	Dates Covered (from... to) -
Title and Subtitle Operational Planning and Conflict Termination	Contract Number	
	Grant Number	
	Program Element Number	
Author(s)	Project Number	
	Task Number	
	Work Unit Number	
Performing Organization Name(s) and Address(es) National Defense University Institute for National Strategic Studies Washington D C 20319-5066	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 The original document contains color images.		
Abstract		
Subject Terms		
Report Classification unclassified	Classification of this page unclassified	
Classification of Abstract unclassified	Limitation of Abstract UU	
Number of Pages 6		

Culture for Combat

When the President decides to use force, the military mindset is to deploy, defeat the enemy, then rapidly exit, turning affairs over to diplomats. Intense interagency coordination generally occurs only at the beginning and end. The military's hasty exit breaks continuity and detracts from shaping the environment for winning the peace and securing the desired endstate. Military culture is often oriented on its own finish line at the expense of long-term national objectives.

Strategic aims are achieved in part by the proper transition of leadership from generals and admirals to civilians. Interagency coordination throughout military operations is the linchpin. Operational planning should be guided not toward military termination but toward setting the stage for continued U.S. interaction by peaceful means.

Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, emphasizes planning for conflict termination, with the most extensive discussions in chapters I and III. Chapter I, "The Strategic Goal and Conflict Termination," describes properly conceived termination criteria as a key to lasting victory. It further states that termination is an essential link between national strategy and post-hostility aims and that military victory is measured by how it supports overall political goals.

Chapter III, "Combatant Command Strategic Planning," contains planning guidance, defines the desired endstate, and discusses how the military scenario helps set the conditions for termination. It continues with guidelines for the combatant commander that prescribe support to the nonmilitary instruments of power. Setting military transition conditions is one of the critical first steps in the estimate and planning process. It is clear from the manual that CINCs are responsible for incorporating conflict termination into campaign planning early on and in a manner consistent with national goals.

Since Joint Pub 3-0 introduces termination planning, one might expect detailed guidance in Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*. Yet termination and transition are mentioned fewer than a dozen times. The absence of techniques and practices for transition planning is glaring.

The *Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia* is the only other joint doctrinal source, containing six pages on termination. Some of its ideas repeat Joint Pub 3-0, but there is additional information as well as guidance about termination when applied to military operations other than war. Service publications provide little additional help.

Peace and the Operational Art

Military theorists have pointed out the importance of conflict termination. Clausewitz stressed planning a campaign clear through to completion in order to achieve political objectives—including creating military conditions that would facilitate negotiations. His recommendation is incorporated into U.S. doctrine in principle. He also cautioned against "overshooting the target" in military operations.¹ In limited wars, combatant commanders must seek the appropriate culminating point to shape the environment for favorable peace terms. Today, Milan Vego is equally emphatic about planning military operations oriented toward the desired endstate, to include political, diplomatic, economic, and social conditions.² What theorists fail to articulate, however, is *how* to conduct termination planning. They are silent in defining the pathway from war winning to peace winning.

To achieve the operational skill required for termination, the military must reach beyond the conceptual constructs and traditional instruments of combat operations. Such expertise can only be achieved by drawing on a wide complement of talent. A number of agencies, including the Department of State, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and Department of Commerce, have significant proficiency to contribute. Geographic CINCs should create operations transition planning cells within their Strategic Planning Directorates (J-5), recruiting representatives from the interagency community, to deliberately design transition strategies.

Some might argue that permanently assigning representatives of other Federal agencies to a joint military headquarters is unnecessary and would further devolve power from Washington to the CINCs. Sound doctrine along with interagency exercises and conferences will solve the problem. Such thinking is shortsighted. Transition planning is not a science. Although doctrine and theory are guides, no formulas exist that will always lead to favorable conflict resolution. The art of planning military operations requires close coordination from a staff accustomed to working together all the time. The art of transition planning requires nothing less. If anything, transition strategies are more difficult because they must incorporate all instruments of national power in a coherent, synchronized fashion.

The A Team

The purpose of the operations transition planning cell would be to assist CINCs in achieving assigned political objectives. While most of the staff

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Celebrating German surrender.

focuses solely on military matters, this team would provide recommendations on achieving favorable conditions in all power dimensions. Using this brain trust, CINCs could develop and present options to the National Command Authorities throughout a campaign. Since the cell's options would come from diverse experts encompassing all policy instruments, it could anticipate possible contingencies, obstacles, opportunities, and objections and therefore have added legitimacy with national leaders. The cell would be assigned a number of tasks that would begin before a conflict and continue through the post-conflict period.

Assisting with endstate definition. After verifying initial objectives, the first task would be to recommend the desired endstate. In some cases, this might mean taking the initiative in planning. Crises develop quickly and unexpectedly, and the national security team may not have time to fully define all the goals of an operation. Restore Hope was a case in point. A tactical planning staff had to

assist the chain of command with desired endstate planning, albeit with less than optimal results.³ An extant interagency planning team would have lifted this additional burden from the military and given endstate definition the attention it demands. Such a process would encourage senior leaders to conduct serious deliberations on the subject and allow the rest of the planning staff to focus on deployment and initial employment of forces.

Defining military transition conditions. After achieving consensus on the endstate, the team would assist in defining the military conditions that will lead to a successful transition to diplomatic leadership. These conditions would become military objectives for CINCs. In conjunction with military planners, the cell could advise on the appropriate ways and means to achieve these objectives. Its mission would be to incorporate and synchronize all key dimensions in the plan.

Sequencing. Favorable transition conditions will take time to evolve. Thus the cell's next task is to develop a sequenced path to the military transition state. This may be a series of phases



U.S. Army (Jose Trigo)

Discussing ceasefire terms, Desert Storm.

where the generation of specific circumstances may signal the end of one phase and the beginning of the next. Bruce Clarke developed a synchronization matrix that could be used for phased transition state planning.⁴ It shows the

when all transition conditions are met, CINCs are ready to hand off leadership to the diplomats

planned status of variables such as command and control, security, economy, and diplomacy by operational phase. The oper-

ation moves to the next phase when a variable meets the tripwire definition described in the matrix. This tool could be tailored to any crisis.

When circumstances favor transition, the cell would advise on how to maintain this preferred state in order to continue progress toward the next phase. Ideally, when all transition conditions are met, CINCs are ready to hand off leadership to the diplomats.

Monitoring, assessing, and recommending changes to strategy. No plan survives contact with the enemy. Political aims may change, the desired endstate could be modified, and conditions that lead to success may vary. Since objectives, endstates, and strategy are a continuum, team members would have an important monitoring and assessment role.

The cell should conduct a rolling net assessment, taking full account of the economic, social, psychological, and diplomatic aspects of existing circumstances. Team members must be integrated into all available theater informational resources to accomplish this vital task. The cell would advise CINCs on ways to calibrate objectives and refine strategy. As components of strategy change,

regional commanders could provide higher quality feedback to national leaders on the implications of modifying strategy.

Developing contingencies. J-5 develops branches and sequels to the base plan during the planning of a major joint operation. Similarly, the termination planning cell must develop offshoots and follow-on activities that would lead to peace winning. As branches and sequels often develop through wargaming, the members should *what if* the consequences of the command's strategy.

Leading the transition. A hand-off to diplomatic leaders would eventually occur as the military transition state approaches. The cell's team members should take the lead in planning the event. Functional experts would coordinate with their counterparts from the country teams to ensure a smooth changeover.

During peacetime engagements, the cell should be directly involved in strategic planning as well as political-military coordination and theater engagement strategy. The CINCs could also use the team to strengthen ties with other government agencies. Transition planning exercises could be conducted in conjunction with major joint operations to provide the cell experience in transition state planning.

Team members could assist the joint task force (JTF) plans cell as crises erupt and CINCs form task forces. Functional experts from the planning cell would be available to act as liaisons with other agencies. Under certain circumstances, such as the employment of a sizable task force for a long duration, it might be wise to stand-up an additional planning cell for the JTF commander.

Organizational Innovation

The cell should include functional experts from several agencies as a strategic asset within J-5. In addition to being conversant in nonmilitary instruments of power, these staff members should be formally trained in military decisionmaking doctrine and methodologies. The core of the team should consist of no more than a dozen individuals, half from non-DOD agencies.

The political advisor (POLAD) would be a key player in planning cells. POLADs counsel on ways and means that ensure that military objectives are in harmony with political policy and are usually key players in engagement and contingency planning. Consistent with these assigned duties, he should be appointed as co-chairman of the transition planning cell.

The advisor should have a planner assigned to the office of POLAD with duty to J-5. This foreign service official would be primarily responsible for the diplomatic aspects of transition state



NATO meeting with
Bosnian factions.

30th Communications Squadron (Christopher Want)

planning and, working with the political advisor, would act as diplomatic liaison to country teams and State Department leaders during military-dominant operations. The advisor and diplomatic planner would play vital roles in assisting CINCs if they were tasked to conduct negotiations, as General Norman Schwarzkopf, USA, did during the Persian Gulf War.

A member of the Department of State's International Information Programs Bureau should also be assigned to each planning cell. The mission of the bureau is to promote foreign understanding and acceptance of U.S. policies. It operates internationally, managing press strategies and providing information about the United States. The bureau representative would work closely with the command's public diplomacy advisor but would focus on helping plan the information component of strategy. Using host nation and regional contacts, this representative would provide J-5 with information on foreign attitudes and trends. The data would be used to adjust features of command strategy to gain support for national objectives. This staffer would also devise methods for countering enemy propaganda, allowing Washington to maintain the initiative in the information operations arena.

Moreover, the planning cell would require membership from national intelligence agencies. As the lead U.S. intelligence organization outside the Department of Defense, CIA should provide a representative. The role of this planner would be twofold: to provide strategic-level intelligence

analysis and furnish covert action planning recommendations. He would also assist joint military intelligence planners with the estimate of the situation. The CIA representative would look at all enemy instruments and how they could be applied to defeat the U.S. military operation while military planners focus on possible enemy armed courses of action. This member would provide CINCs with military and nonmilitary options for countering enemy strategies and shaping conditions to effect conflict resolution.

The planning cell may require augmentation from other specialized intelligence agencies if the CIA representative needs intelligence planning support. A national intelligence planning team should be formed that would function like a national intelligence support team; however, the focus would be on strategic planning for transition operations.

Since economics is a crucial instrument of national power, the cell would also require dedicated specialists in that field. A representative from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) should be assigned to bolster the command's designated experts. The agency has the mission of assisting foreign governments with economic growth, political freedom, and good governance. It is a primary player in U.S. foreign disaster relief; thus its officials would be especially suited for dealing with chaotic post-conflict conditions.



Coordinating return of displaced Albanians.

An official from the Department of Commerce, which promotes national economic interests abroad, should be part of the team as well. This member could assist transition planning by recommending trade and market access components to conflict resolution strategies. Commerce and USAID representatives would give counsel in the development of economy-building strategies. Their skills would be especially useful in planning the post-transition phase of military operations.

The planning cell would also have military representatives from throughout the major staff directorates. The other co-chairman of the cell should be one of the J-5 deputies responsible for deliberate planning. This participant should receive formal instruction in interagency operations. Training can be integrated into the curriculum at institutions such as the National Defense University, Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Members of State, Commerce, CIA, and USAID could also be sent to these schools for short courses on conflict termination and transition planning.

The cell should have a standard nucleus of members; however, the CINC should modify the team to meet unique regional conditions. It must be dynamic, with complete membership dependent on the contingency. Planners from other countries may be included during multinational operations, for instance. In other circumstances it might be appropriate to seek advice from nongovernmental or volunteer organizations. Extending invitations to members outside the

Federal Government would produce additional challenges. For instance, access to some sources of intelligence would be restricted. Nonetheless, United Nations and other coalition operations have shown that the benefits of a long-term collective approach may outweigh the constraints.

To launch these organizational initiatives, a new publication must be drafted to outline how interagency transition planning should be done. Joint Pub 3-08, *Interagency Coordination During Joint Planning*, contains information that should be incorporated. However, an operations transition doctrine is needed before a publication can be developed. Operational planning concepts already in use—like the commander's estimate of the situation—can be modified to provide a basis for more detailed guidance. Planners from the State Department, CIA, and other agencies should be consulted as doctrine is advanced. Theorists and scholars at the senior military colleges should provide recommendations.

A beta-transition planning cell should be organized now under one of the unified command headquarters. This trial cell could be put through intensive exercises and wargames to determine the appropriate interagency organization. Team members could also develop tools for transition planning. A validated fielding version could be stood up after testing.

The future application of military power is likely to be within the context of a limited war or military operation other than war. These environments are complex and filled with uncertainty and constraints. Success requires a clear strategy for winning the peace through successful transition planning. The military must shift focus from military termination to military transition. To make this adjustment, mindsets need to change. Interagency coordination throughout military-dominant operations must be improved. The operations transition planning cell is a step in the right direction.

JFQ

the planning cell would have military representatives from the major staff directorates

NOTES

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 579.

² Milan Vego, *On Operational Art* (Newport: Naval War College, 1999), p. 345.

³ S. L. Arnold, "Somalia: An Operation Other Than War," *Military Review*, vol. 73, no. 12 (December 1993), p. 34.

⁴ Bruce B.G. Clarke, "End-State Planning: The Somalia Case," in *Managing Contemporary Conflict: Pillars of Success*, edited by Max G. Manwaring and William J. Olson (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), p. 55.