

War Termination and Joint Planning

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Surrender ceremonies
in Tokyo Bay,
September 2, 1945.

Report Documentation Page

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While attending the Armed Forces Staff College, the authors took part in an exercise called Certain Challenge which exposed them to strategic and operational concerns at the Joint Staff level. One lesson of the exercise was the importance of guidance from the National Command Authorities (NCA) on how to end a war. That guidance was lacking throughout the planning process during the exercise and had a ripple effect of uncertainty since, absent an end-state with specific criteria, the crisis procedures were left without a unifying theme. What is more, volume one of Joint Pub 5-03, *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (Planning Policies and Procedures)*, did not provide us with guidance on how to integrate and analyze criteria for the termination of a conflict.

Even step-by-step crisis action checklists which are part of the joint operation planning and execution system (JOPES) lack clarity on the subject of war termination. One is not reminded to consider termination criteria. It is reasonable to assume that timely development and continuous revision of criteria should be integrated into all phases of JOPES, yet there is a void in guidance. The issue which confronted us was whether this gap is real or the result of our unfamiliarity with joint doctrine.

The lack of clear guidance on war termination criteria is confirmed by recent operations in the Persian Gulf and Somalia as well as through an examination of joint doctrine. Concern over this issue—from Clausewitz to a range of other prominent theorists of war—speaks to its historical as well as contemporary relevance.¹ While no one can predict how a conflict will end, Clausewitz knew the effect that chance has on conflict,²

but asserted that the primary characteristic of war was its nature as a political tool and not chance itself. He wrote:

*If we keep in mind that war springs from some political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it. . . . The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment . . . is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking. . . .*³

That test involves two factors: that war is a deliberate instrument of policy and that it varies with given situations. War, in essence, reflects the motives of policymakers.⁴ This is important because it reveals that although war is in the realm of chance, it is more fundamentally a province of policymakers who must inform manipulators of violence—that, is military commanders—what they want from war and how to end it. Surprisingly ending war receives scant attention: “The fact is that of the three categories of the spectrum of conflict,” writes Harry Summers, “war termination has been virtually ignored. In our fascination with the means of strategy, we have neglected the study of its ends—those objects which will lead directly to peace.”⁵

Why does the United States fail to prepare for the end of war? Finding a definitive answer to that question may prove elusive. Russell Wiegley has suggested that the American way of war follows a strategy of annihilation.⁶ If so, this approach could predispose us to destroy an enemy force while blinding us to other means of achieving objectives. Furthermore, inflexibility can lead an adversary to fight harder and prolong conflict. As Sun Tzu mused, a desperate foe should not be pressed too hard, especially if he is returning home, because he will probably fight to the death.⁷ A bloody battle of little strategic or political import is a double tragedy.

The amount of bloodshed and violence in a conflict has a bearing both on the war and the peace that follows:

*The modern desperation in war produces a bitter legacy. . . . All sides harbor bitter feelings because of widespread death and destruction. The losing side agonizes over how much it gave and how much it lost. The winner resents the suffering endured in relation to the objectives achieved. . . . Winning a better state of peace after a modern war may be the most difficult of all tasks.*⁸

why does the United States fail to prepare for the end of war?

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U.S. Navy (Tony Joseph)

UNISOM troops leaving for home under United Shield.

As difficult as winning that state may be, it must be approached with an understanding of the consequences of considering war and peace in isolation. They are linked; actions in one affect the other. Based on the literature it appears that there is one key connection between them, namely, the termination phase, that is grasped by the Nation. But recent conflicts demonstrate that, while we may understand the concept of war termination, we have difficulty applying it.

Historical Perspective

After identifying a potential flaw in the joint crisis planning process, we tested our insights against those of military planners in the Gulf War and Somalia. We had to establish definitions for two key concepts, end-state and war termination, before drawing conclusions. We chose to use John Fishel's definition of end-state. He said it is "what the leadership desires the battlefield and the surrounding political landscape to look like when the war is over. . . . Moreover, end-states suggest descriptions, in fairly great detail, of the goals of national policy."⁹

Termination objectives "define the intended manner of conflict termination and the required military and diplomatic achievements to obtain it."¹⁰ War termination criteria thus seem not only to establish the conditions for a cease-fire, but also help commanders and planners prepare for what follows combat operations.

On August 5, 1990, three days after Iraq invaded Kuwait, President Bush articulated the following objectives to Congress: "immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government; security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf; safety and protection of the lives of American citizens abroad."¹¹ As diplomatic, economic, and limited military means failed to achieve those objectives, he ordered that the objectives be accomplished through offensive military action. According to one analyst, the coalition leaders tried to think the conflict through from start to finish: "Bush and the other allied leaders were careful to em-

phasize that the winning of the war had to be followed by winning the peace."¹²

The initial combat phase of Desert Storm was fought from the sky. Coalition aircraft struck targets in the theater for a month to prepare for the ground phase. Once started, the ground effort moved quickly. In 72 hours "the coalition was about to accomplish . . . two key objectives—Iraqi army out of Kuwait and reestablishment of the legitimate government."¹³ General Powell found the reports of carnage disturbing and told General Schwarzkopf that a cease-fire could not be far away. He also relayed his concerns to the President. Lawrence Freedman wrote, "Politically the President had to judge whether the extra advantage to be gained by finishing off the remaining Iraqi units was worth the political costs of the continuing carnage. [NSC staff member] Richard Haass later observed, using an American football analogy, 'We didn't want to be accused of piling on once the whistle had been blown.' If the war ended on a sour note, this could complicate post-war politics. For these reasons the President was now inclined to conclude the war."¹⁴

Some analysts discovered that the desire to end the war raised a problem for the coalition: "Once the basic objective of the

**mutual understanding
between policymakers
and commanders requires
constant attention**

war—evicting Iraq from Kuwait—was accomplished, there was no clear post-war path for the coalition to follow.”¹⁵ One observer also found confusion on the post-war path that the Nation should take: “The U.S. Government . . . suggested another political objective for Kuwait that was not at all reflected in the end-state derived by the military planners. This objective was to move the Kuwaiti government to a more democratic mode.”¹⁶ And there was more confusion in the air. Fishel went on to note that public rhetoric by President Bush caused some concern about whether the removal of Saddam Hussein had become one of the criteria for war termination.¹⁷

Somalia illustrated the troubled relationship between political leaders and field commanders in crises. The commander of the 10th Mountain Division, for instance, had difficulty in obtaining specific guidance from NCA about ending the operation. In an article describing the lessons of that experience, he observed that he and his staff drafted proposed end-states to forward up the chain for approval and also fashioned criteria to determine if the desired end-state could be achieved.¹⁸ Mutual understanding between policymakers and commanders requires constant attention.

Doctrine

Before analyzing joint doctrine, and specifically JOPES, one must briefly consider the joint doctrine system. It is relatively new and still incomplete with many publications in development. It uses keystone volumes as foundation guidance for major areas of doctrine. Most joint planning guidance is contained in Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations*, and Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*. JOPES is a subset of multiple volumes in the 5-0 series. A look at Joint Pub 5-0 and Joint Pub 3-0 with regard to termination criteria is revealing.

First, Joint Pub 5-0 does not discuss termination criteria or how they are related to the end-state and planning military operations. It focuses on basic principles and concepts of joint planning and describes the organization and structure for conducting deliberate and crisis action planning.¹⁹ Anyone using JOPES and in need of clarification

on termination criteria will not find it in Pub 5-0. Joint Pub 3-0 stands out by comparison.²⁰ War termination was much on the minds of its authors and is covered in considerable detail. Planners are reminded to blend termination criteria into initial planning and strategy formulation prior to operational activity, to wit:

*Properly conceived conflict termination criteria are key to ensuring that victories achieved with military force endure . . . it is fundamentally important to understand that conflict termination is an essential link between national security strategy, national military strategy, and posthostility aims—the desired outcome.*²¹

Further, there is guidance on when to consider criteria:

*Before forces are committed, [a JFC] must know how NCA intend to terminate the operation and ensure its outcomes endure, and then determine how to implement that strategic design at the operational level [emphasis added].*²²

Pub 3-0 offers clear guidance on the relevance of war termination criteria in joint planning. Since anyone who finds Pub 5-0 lacking has another source, why worry about deficiencies in the JOPES manual? Is the answer to simply to look up the guidance in another publication? The short response is no. A better answer requires understanding the JOPES role in national planning.

JOPES is much more than a manual. It is an elaborate system run by many people who use procedures, publications, and automatic data processing to integrate NCA policy decisions with military planning and execution at national, theater, and supporting organizational levels. JOPES supports this integration by facilitating actions during deliberate planning or crisis action planning. Deliberate planning “is a cyclic process carried out in peacetime to develop and refine plans to be used in wartime.” It is a detailed, intricate five-phase process which can take 18 to 24 months.²³ Yet nowhere in the chapters on deliberate planning is the critical nature of war termination criteria discussed. This is not a serious problem because of the long timeframe involved; planners have plenty of opportunity to refer to Joint Pub 3-0 and all the pertinent information in other doctrinal

publications while developing their deliberate plans.

A crisis, on the other hand, requires a different process, because there is a threat against U.S. interests that develops rapidly and may call for a military response.²⁴ Crisis action planning, according to Pub 5-03.1, “provides for the rapid and effective exchange of information and analysis, the timely preparation of military [action] for consideration by crisis procedures, and the prompt transmission of NCA decisions to supported military commanders.”²⁵ Commanders use options previously developed by deliberate planning if possible to solve crises quickly, but such plans have major shortcomings. JOPES points out that deliberate planning is done for *hypothetical* crises and relies “heavily on assumptions regarding the political and military circumstances [which] make it improbable that any contingency plan will be usable without modification.”²⁶ In a crisis, military staffs are faced with a serious, rapidly developing situation for which they must produce a plan that takes into account the realities of a particular problem, not a hypothetical incident. Moreover, they may not have a lot of time to consult the keystone doctrinal manuals.

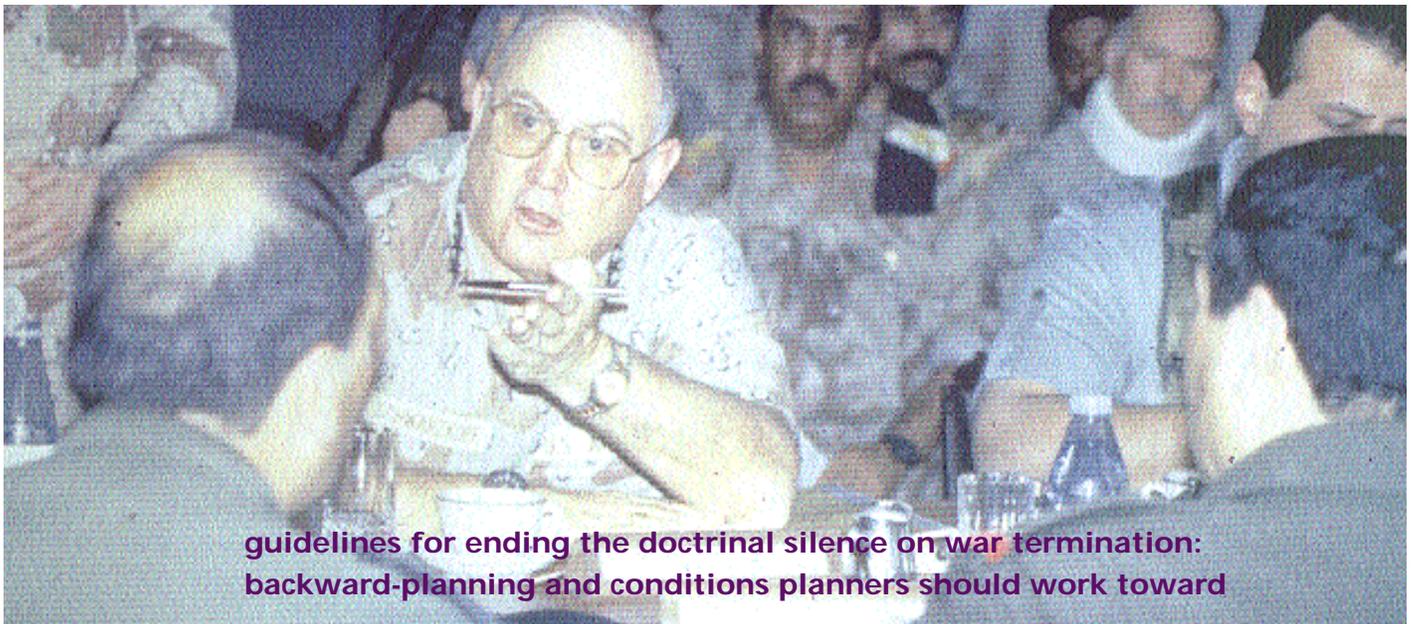
JOPES helps alleviate the tremendous pressure in a crisis by building a six-phase process with a checklist of actions for anticipated problems. Are clear instructions given on formulating war termination criteria and a coherent strategy around them? Are criteria articulated and passed on to operational commanders? Unfortunately the answer to both questions is no; much guidance is given, but little concerns conflict termination. For example, phase two of crisis action planning is crisis assessment. This phase “[begins] with a report from a supported commander and ends with a decision by the NCA or the Chairman . . . to develop possible military COAs.”²⁷ Joint planners are not advised at this critical time to ask NCA about their concept for terminating a war or crisis. They are instead advised to review plans, coordinate noncombatant evacuation with the Department of State, review legal obligations, evaluate rules of engagement, update strategic lift, and redirect intelligence gathering, et al.²⁸ Such actions are important but

so are conflict termination issues. Prompting to begin a dialogue between NCA and the Joint Staff is not found in this part of JOPES.

Guidance also is not on the supported commander’s checklist. The JOPES checklist does not lead supported commanders to query the Joint Staff, CJCS, or NCA about interwoven courses of action that they develop with certain termination criteria. They are told to take the same types of actions as the Joint Staff.²⁹ Even guidance given by NCA through CJCS at the end of the crisis assessment phase does not foster dialogue on termination issues. The Chairman’s warning order, according to the JOPES format, contains general guidance on assumptions, a generic remark about political constraints, and the requirement for a concise mission statement. Other guidance is given on courses of action, operational security and deception, psychological operations, intelligence and counterintelligence, civil affairs, et al., but nothing specific about termination criteria.³⁰

The subject is never explicitly mentioned in phase two. Nor is it raised in phases three, four, or five. Only with phase six (execution) and publication of the execute order does the concept appear. JOPES guidance states that CJCS “takes actions needed to effect a quick and successful termination of the crisis.”³¹ This information, however, is in the basic chapter on crisis planning and not the checklist. In the latter, CJCS is advised to assess the *accomplishment of objectives* and the supported commander to *replan or terminate the operation*.³² This is the first explicit mention of crisis termination and comes after all previous phases—situation development, crisis assessment, COA development and selection, and execution planning—are finished. Despite being urged to integrate termination criteria early, the guidance given to commanders and planners in a pressure-filled crisis situation consists of only two references in the final execution phase.

The advice of James Reed, special assistant to the Secretary of the Army, is appropriate: “War termination has been a neglected topic for doctrinal development . . . current operational doctrines display a serious blind spot with regard to the issue of conflict termination.”³³ His proposal includes seven guidelines for ending the doctrinal silence on war



**guidelines for ending the doctrinal silence on war termination:
backward-planning and conditions planners should work toward**

U.S. Army (Jose D. Trejo)

Discussing cease fire terms, March 3, 1991.

termination, two directly related to this discussion: backward-planning and clearly defining the conditions military planners should work toward. He trusts this would “prompt increased communication between the civilian and military leadership . . . to ensure congruence between operational objectives and the larger policy aims of a campaign.”³⁴

A review of the theory, literature, issues, and doctrine leads to the following conclusions:

- ▼ Winning the peace is as important as winning the war and calls for judicious application of force and knowing when to stop fighting.

- ▼ Current joint doctrine used for deliberate planning (especially Joint Pub 3-0) adequately sensitizes planners to the concept of war termination criteria.

- ▼ The practical application of the concept in crises—as seen in the Persian Gulf War and Somalia—seems haphazard.

- ▼ The absence of initial or updated political guidance about termination criteria in a crisis can be critical. Such gaps may require commanders to alter the tempo of operations at critical times to allow for guidance to be developed or to improvise their own. Such unilateral military actions may be counterproductive because they reverse the critical flow between political guidance and the application of military force.

- ▼ The current system for crisis action planning in JOPES does not highlight the need for the Joint Staff to facilitate the dialogue between NCA and operational military commanders on war termination criteria, nor does it mandate the

formulation and issuance of specific guidance to the military commanders.

- ▼ Such criteria, once developed, must be constantly reassessed by all parties involved as the situation evolves.

Responses to conflict must be planned and conducted to enhance prospects for long-term peace and stability. One dimension is knowing when, where, and how to stop hostilities. There is a gap in the current JCS planning guidance, however, that may result in planners overlooking the importance of this factor during a fast moving crisis. Therefore, new guidance needs to be added to each phase of the JOPES crisis action planning system sections of the manual as follows:

- ▼ *phase one (situation development)*—guidance that the theater commander’s assessment should incorporate thoughts on how to resolve the situation

- ▼ *phase two (crisis assessment)*—guidance that CJCS should query NCA about termination criteria and to include NCA termination guidance in the warning order to facilitate the supported commander’s backwards planning

- ▼ *phase three (COA development)*—first, guidance that theater commander must use the termination criteria from warning order to develop possible COAs; second, CJCS will evaluate the CINC’s estimate and recommended COA using the termination criteria before submission for NCA approval

▼ *phase four (COA selection)*—guidance that CJCS should reconfirm the termination criteria with NCA; CJCS should also review the criteria in either the planning order or the alert order to the theater commander

▼ *phase five (execution planning)*—guidance that the theater commander reevaluate the COA selected by NCA in terms of the reconfirmed termination criteria; CINCs should, situation permitting, bring any shortfalls or limitations to the attention of CJCS and NCA before entering the next phase

▼ *phase six (execution)*—guidance that CJCS monitor the situation for potential changes in the applicability of current termination criteria and communicate them to all concerned parties.

The above recommendations will ensure that termination criteria are considered throughout the crisis planning process. Until then, we will enter every crisis with a built-in handicap. The time to change JOPES to address this void is now. 

NOTES

¹ A search revealed 37 books and articles from the mid-1980s with an accelerating interest in the 1990s.

² See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 101 and following.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 87–88.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵ Harry G. Summers, Jr., “War: Deter, Fight, Terminate; The Purpose of War is a Better Peace,” *Naval War College Review*, vol. 39, no. 1 (January–February 1986), p. 19.

⁶ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. xxii.

⁷ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 109–10.

⁸ Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *The Eagle's Talons: The American Experience at War* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, 1988), p. 34.

⁹ John T. Fishel, “Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue: War Termination and Desert Storm” (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, August 31, 1992), p. 59.

¹⁰ Armed Forces Staff College, *The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1993*, AFSC Pub 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), p. I-I-41.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf War: Final Report to Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, April 1992), p. 19.

¹² Ronald Dannreuther, “The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis,” *Adelphi Papers* no. 264 (London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1992), p. 57.

¹³ Lawrence Freedman, *The Gulf Conflict, 1990–1991* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 403.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 404.

¹⁵ James Blackwell, Michael J. Mazarr, and Don M. Snider, Center on Strategic and International Studies Study Group on Lessons Learned from the Gulf War, *The Gulf War—Military Lessons Learned* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), p. 47.

¹⁶ John T. Fishel, “Liberation, Occupation, and Rescue,” p. 61.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁸ S.L. Arnold, “Somalia: An Operation Other than War,” *Military Review* (December 1993), p. 34.

¹⁹ Joint Pub 5-0, *Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, May 1993). It is important to note that this is still in the proposed stage of doctrine development and subject to change; as currently structured it provides only very generic guidance.

²⁰ Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations* (Washington: Government Printing Office, September 9, 1993). Chapter 2 fails to mention war termination criteria or post-conflict concerns, but there are numerous references elsewhere beginning with a three-page discussion on p. III-30.

²¹ Joint Pub 5-03.1, *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System*, Volume 1, *Planning Policies and Procedures* (Washington: Government Printing Office, August 4, 1993), p. I-1. Five volumes and supplements address various aspects of JOPES. Only volume 1 covers the minimum content for crisis action planning procedures which should address the areas where war termination criteria would fall if it had been properly covered. See pp. I-2 and I-4.

²² *Ibid.*, p. III-2.

²³ Class notes from AFSC Pub 1, p. 6–4.

²⁴ This paraphrases the definition of crisis found in Joint Pub 5-03.1, volume 1, p. V-1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. V-1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. V-1.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. A-2-1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. A-2-1 to A-2-2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. A-2-2 to A-2-3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, all of Annex C.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. V-15.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. A-6-1 to A-6-2.

³³ James W. Reed, “Should Deterrence Fail: War Termination in Campaign Planning,” *Parameters*, vol. 23, no. 2 (Summer 1993), pp. 41–42.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.