War termination criteria and JOPES: A dangerous Omission in U.S. crisis action planning

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(Executive Summary)

Military analysts say that winning the peace after a modern war may be the most difficult of all tasks. Some joint doctrine (especially Joint Pub 3-0) recognizes that one key to winning the peace is to have the National Command Authorities (NCA) give a well thought out end-state with definite termination criteria to the military commanders and planners as early as possible in a crisis. Yet this important dialogue is overlooked in crisis action planning doctrine. U.S. military planners use the guidance and checklists in Joint Pub 5-03.1, Joint Planning and Execution System, Volume 1 (Planning Policies and Procedures), — JOPES — to respond to a crisis, yet nowhere in JOPES are planners reminded to foster this exchange of critical information between the NCA, the Joint Staff, and the theater commander. The authors point out where the gaps in doctrine are and recommend refinements to all six phases of the current crisis action planning procedures. They conclude that JOPES must be modified now or else the United States will unnecessarily continue to enter every crisis with a built in handicap.
INTRODUCTION

We must perceive the necessity of every war being looked upon as a whole from the very outset, and that at the very first step forward the commander should have the end in view to which every line must converge.

Clausewitz

War involves in its progress such a train of unforeseen and unsupposed circumstances that no human wisdom can calculate the end....

Thomas Paine{2}

As students in Class 94-I1 at the Armed Forces Staff College (AFSC), we started our twelve week course in January 1994 with an exercise called "Certain Challenge." The exercise exposed us to some of the critical strategic and operational concerns at the Joint Staff level during a crisis. At the end of the exercise, we reviewed the lessons we had learned. One discussion topic was the importance of receiving clear guidance from the National Command Authorities (NCA) about how a conflict should end. In retrospect, we noted how lack of information in this area caused a ripple of uncertainty through the planning process; our planning would have had a much stronger unifying theme if the crisis procedures had prompted us to plan backwards from a clear end-state with specific termination criteria. We concluded that Joint Pub 5-03, Volume 1, Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (Planning Policies and Procedures) - hereafter known as JOPES - provides inadequate guidance about integrating and analyzing war termination issues during a crisis. This conclusion prompted us to study how end-state and termination criteria are communicated between the NCA, Joint Staff, and operational commanders during a crisis. We had followed the step-by-step crisis
action checklists in JOPES, yet our planning lacked clarity and focus. Nowhere in the crisis planning procedures were we reminded to consider termination criteria. Our instincts told us the timely development and continuous refinement of war termination criteria ought to be integrated into every phase of the JOPES crisis action process, yet there seemed to be a gap in the guidance. Our goal was to determine whether the gap was real and needed to be filled or just the result of our unfamiliarity with joint doctrine.

Two clarifications are necessary before proceeding. First, this paper uses terms like "war" and "conflict" interchangeably; while the terms can be used to express very different ideas, our investigation centers on the general question of how to link end-state and termination criteria to crisis planning. Second, this paper does not address the separate topic of how end-states and termination criteria are crafted through multi-agency coordination at the national level; instead, it looks at how these critical pieces of information are communicated and integrated into military plans.

The suspicion that we were on the right track was repeatedly confirmed as we studied the recent conflicts in the Gulf and Somalia and dug into the details of joint doctrine. What motivated us most was that many other researchers and writers also considered war termination criteria a neglected subject. Concern about this issue, ranging from Clausewitz to the large group of authors of recent books and articles, convinced us this topic had both enduring historical and contemporary relevance.

During our literature search we discovered the great emphasis both military theorists and current analysts give to the need for accurate and timely consideration of conflict termination criteria. The opening quote of
this paper showed that Carl von Clausewitz, the military theorist, believed the end of a conflict must be kept in view from its very beginning. That theoretical imperative was tempered, as shown by the American Revolution leader Thomas Paine’s quote, by the knowledge that war is the province of chance and unforeseen events; it seemed nobody could possibly predict how a conflict would end. Clausewitz shared Paine’s understanding of the effect chance and luck had on conflict, but asserted that the primary characteristic of war was not chance, but rather its nature as a political tool. 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 ....{5}

In the last line of the above quote Clausewitz spoke of "that test". What was that test? It had two components. First, an understanding that wars are deliberate instruments of policy, and second, that wars vary with the motives wrapped up in the situation; wars, in their essence, reflect the motives of the policymakers.{6} This is important because it shows that while war is indeed the realm of chance, it nevertheless is more fundamentally the province of the desires and motivations of the policymakers. The policymakers should tell the manipulators of violence, the military commanders, what they want from war and how it should end. Surprisingly, ending wars has, according to noted author Harry Summers, received scant attention:

[T]he fact is that of the three categories of the spectrum of conflict, 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."{7}

Why does the United States neglect to prepare for the end of wars? A definite answer to that question is beyond the scope of this paper but it may be that we are victims of our own history. Noted author and professor of history Russell Weigley suggests the American way of war is one of a strategy of annihilation.{8} If that is so, such an approach may predispose us to the destruction of an enemy’s armed force and blind us to other ways to achieve our aims. Furthermore, such inflexibility may cause our adversaries to fight harder and prolong the conflict. As the famous Chinese philosopher of war Sun Tzu pointed out long ago, a desperate foe should not be pressed too hard, especially if they are returning home, because they will probably fight to the death{9}; bloody battles of little strategic or political importance are double tragedies.

The amount of bloodshed and violence in a conflict has a bearing both on the war and the peace that follows as pointed out by military strategists and authors Dennis Drew and Donald Snow. They wrote:

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.{10}

As difficult as the task is, it must still be tackled and worked with a clear eye as to the consequences if war and peace were considered in isolation. War and peace are linked; actions in one area effect the other. Judged by the number of books and articles written on this topic it would seem one key connection between war and peace, the termination phase, is
understood in the United States. Our analysis of two recent conflicts shows that, while we may understand the concepts of war termination, we still have difficulty applying them in a crisis.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

After identifying a potential flaw in the joint crisis planning process, we attempted to compare our experience with that of the military planners in the Gulf War and Somalia. We had to establish definitions for two key concepts, end-state and war termination, before we could begin to draw any conclusions. We chose to use military analyst John Fishel’s definition of end-state. He called it,

... what the leadership desires the battlefield and the surrounding political landscape to look like when the war is over, and it represents a range of acceptable political/military outcomes. Moreover, end-states suggest descriptions, in fairly great detail, of the goals of national policy.\(^{11}\)

AFSC Pub 1 calls termination objectives, "Specific objectives that define the intended manner of conflict termination and the required military and diplomatic achievements to obtain it."\(^{12}\) War termination criteria thus seem not only to establish the conditions for a cease-fire, but also help military commanders and planners prepare for the national activities that follow combat operations. We can now scrutinize recent events for the correct details.

Iraq attacked Kuwait on 2 August 1990. On 5 August, President Bush conveyed the following national policy objectives to the 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.{13}

After political, diplomatic, economic, and limited military means to achieve these objectives failed, the President gave the order to accomplish the objectives through decisive offensive military action. According to Roland Dannreuther, a European political analyst writing on the Gulf War, coalition leaders attempted to think the conflict through from start to finish. He said, "President Bush and the other allied leaders were careful to emphasize that the winning of the war had to be followed by winning the peace.{14}

The initial direct combat phase of the Gulf War was fought from the sky. Coalition airpower struck targets throughout the theater for over a month in preparation for the upcoming ground phase of the campaign. The ground effort, once started, progressed very quickly. Within 72 hours the coalition had progressed to the point that "the coalition was about to accomplish their two key objectives - Iraqi army out of Kuwait and reestablishment of the legitimate government." is General Powell found the reports of carnage disturbing and warned General Schwarzkopf that a cease-fire could not be far away. He also relayed his concerns to the President. Lawrence Freedman, a U.S. analyst of the Gulf conflict, wrote about the dynamics in action and discovered that,

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. As 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.{16}
James Blackwell, one of the military analysts for Cable News Network during the Gulf War, along with a group of fellow analysts at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, found the desire to end the war uncovered a problem for the coalition. They wrote, "once the basic objective of the war - evicting the Iraqi troops from Kuwait - was accomplished, there was no clear post-war path for the coalition to follow."{17} Author John Fishel of the U.S. Army’s Strategic Studies Institute likewise found confusion about what path the United States should take in the post-war phase. He wrote, "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."{18} And there was more confusion brewing. 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.{19}

Somalia provided another example of troubled communication between U.S. political leadership and military commanders during a crisis. U.S. Army Major General S. L. Arnold, commander of the 10th Mountain Division, had problems getting specific guidance from the NCA about when the operation should end. In an article describing the lessons he learned from that experience, he noted two observations pertinent to our discussion. He found he and his staff had to consider and draft proposed end-states for consideration up the chain of command for approval and, second, they had to fashion assessment criteria to determine whether they had indeed met the desired end-state.{20} He went on to say, "Understanding intent and working towards an agreed end-state is the key."{21} Establishing this common understanding between the
policymakers and military commanders in the field requires constant work and attention. The following review of current doctrine confirms our suspicion that problems exist in crisis action planning.

DOCTRINE

Before starting an analysis of joint doctrine, and specifically JOPES, one must briefly consider the joint doctrine system. The system is relatively new and still incomplete with many publications under development. The system uses "keystone manuals" to provide foundation guidance for the major areas of doctrine. Most guidance for joint planning comes from two keystone documents: Proposed Joint Pub 5-0, Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations, and Joint Pub 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations. JOPES (Pub 5-03) is a subset of multiple volumes (5-03.1, etc.) in the 5-0 series of manuals. A short examination of Joint Pubs 5-0 and 3-0 regarding advice about termination criteria is quite revealing.

First, Joint Pub 5-0 does not discuss termination criteria and how they are related to end-state and planning military operations. It focuses on basic principles and concepts of joint planning and describes the U.S. organization and structure for the conduct of both deliberate and crisis action planning. Anyone using JOPES and needing clarification about war termination criteria would not find it in Pub 5-0.

Joint Pub 3-0 stands in distinct contrast to Joint Pub 5-0 and its lack of guidance about war termination. It is obvious that war termination was very much on the minds of the authors of Pub 3-0. It is repeatedly mentioned throughout the publication with details covered in five of six chapters; the longest discussion takes up three pages. Military planners are often reminded to blend war termination criteria into the initial planning process and strategy formulation before any operational activities
occur. For example, the publication states, "Properly conceived conflict termination criteria are key to ensuring that victories achieved with military force endure...." and, "... 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."{24} Furthermore, the guidance about when in the planning process to consider war termination criteria states,

Before forces are committed, JFCs [Joint Force Commanders] must know how the 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).{25}

Pub 3-0 provides very clear guidance on the importance of war termination criteria to the overall joint planning process. Thus planners who find Pub 5-0 lacking have another source to turn to and use. Then why worry about the deficiencies in the JOPES manual? Is the answer to the research question simply to look up the guidance in another publication? The short answer to this last question is no. A better answer requires that the questioner understand the role JOPES plays in the overall national planning process.

It is important to realize that JOPES is more than a manual. It is an elaborate system run by many people using procedures, publications, and automatic data processing equipment to integrate NCA policy decisions with military planning and execution at the national, theater, and supporting organization level.{26} JOPES supports this integration by facilitating actions in one of two situations: either during deliberate planning or during crisis action planning. Before proceeding, one must know the basic differences between these two different types of plans.
Deliberate planning "is designed as a cyclic process during peacetime conditions and provides . . . an opportunity to develop and refine plans to be used in wartime."{27} This five-phase process is very detailed, with intricate coordination, and can take anywhere from 18 to 24 months to complete.{28} However, nowhere do the JOPES chapters on deliberate planning discuss the critical nature of war termination criteria. This is not a serious problem because of the long timeframe involved; planners have plenty of opportunity to refer to the guidance in 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 very different planning process compared to deliberate planning. It is essentially a situation where there is a threat against the vital interests of the United States that develops rapidly and for which military forces may be used in response.{29} Crisis action planning procedures, according to JOPES, provide for the rapid and effective exchange of information and analysis, the timely preparation of military COAs [Courses of Action] for consideration by the NCA, and the prompt transmission of NCA decisions to supported military commanders."{30} If possible, commanders use options previously developed during deliberate planning to help solve the crisis quickly, but such plans have inevitable shortcomings. JOPES points out that deliberate plans are made for a "hypothetical crisis" and that they rely "heavily on assumptions regarding the political and military circumstances [which] make it improbable that any contingency plan will be usable without modification."{31} In a crisis, military staffs are thus faced with a serious, rapidly developing situation for which they must produce a plan that takes into account, as quickly as possible, the realities of that particular problem,
not some hypothetical incident - and they may not have a lot of time to consult the keystone doctrinal manuals.

JOPES tries to help alleviate the tremendous time pressure inherent in a crisis by building a six-phase process backed by a checklist of actions to take in response to anticipated problems. Are clear instructions and guidance given about formulating war termination criteria and building a coherent strategy around them? Are the criteria clearly articulated and passed on to the commanders responsible for conducting operations? Unfortunately the answer to both questions is no; much guidance is given but very little of it is about 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 of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop possible military CoAs."{32} The Joint Staff planners aren’t advised during this critical time to ask the NCA about their concept for terminating the war or crisis. They are instead advised to review plans, consider non-combatant evacuation coordination with the Department of State, review legal obligations and treaties, review rules of engagement, update the strategic lift situation, and redirect intelligence gathering, among other items.{33} These actions are undeniably important but, as was shown earlier, so are conflict termination issues. The prompting to begin this critical dialogue between the NCA and the Joint Staff is not found in this part of JOPES.

Guidance isn’t found in the supported commander’s part of the checklist, either. Supported commanders aren’t guided by the JOPES checklist during this crisis to query the Joint Staff, the Chairman, or the NCA about molding the courses of action they develop to certain
They are told to take the same types of actions as the Joint Staff.{34}

Even the guidance given by the NCA through the Chairman at the end of the crisis assessment phase neglects to specifically foster dialogue between the participants about termination issues. The Chairman’s Warning order, according to the format in JOPES, contains general guidance on assumptions, a generic remark about political constraints, and the requirement for a concise mission statement. Other guidance is given regarding courses of action, operational security and deception, psychological operations, intelligence and counterintelligence considerations, civil affairs, and other administrative instructions, but nothing specific about termination criteria.{35}

Research shows that termination criteria are never explicitly mentioned at all in phase two. As a matter of fact, the subject is not raised in the guidance given for phases three, four, or five either. only at the beginning of phase six (Execution) with the publication of the Execute Order does the concept show up. JOPES guidance notes, "the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff . . . takes actions needed to effect a quick and successful termination of the crisis."{36} This information is in the basic chapter on crisis planning, not in the checklist section. In the checklist section the Chairman is advised to, "assess accomplishment of objectives," while the supported commander is advised to "replan or terminate the operation."{37} This first explicit mention of crisis termination comes after all the previous planning phases of situation development, crisis assessment, course of action development, course of action selection, and execution planning are finished. Unfortunately, despite all the emphasis by theorists on the importance of early integration of war termination
criteria into plans, and despite the historical evidence of this truth, the guidance given to commanders and planners in a pressure-filled crisis situation consists of mere portions of two sentences in the final execution phase.

The advice of James Reed, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, seems apt. He wrote, "war termination has been a neglected topic for doctrinal development," and "our current operational doctrines display a serious blind spot with regard to the issue of conflict termination."{38} He went on to propose seven guidelines for fixing the doctrinal silence about war termination, two of which are directly related to this discussion. He urged first a backward-planning approach and, second, a clear definition of the conditions military planners should work towards; he hoped such suggestions would "prompt increased communication between the civilian and military leadership . . . to ensure congruence between operational objectives and the larger policy aims of a campaign."{39} Our conclusions mirror his thoughts.

CONCLUSIONS

Our review of theory, current literature, recent events, 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 available for use during the deliberate planning process (especially Joint Pub 3-0) adequately sensitizes planners to the war termination criteria concept.

* The practical application of the concept during a crisis, as demonstrated in the Gulf War and Somalia, seems haphazard.

* The absence of initial or updated civilian guidance about termination criteria during a crisis can be critical. Such gaps may force
military commanders to alter the tempo of operations at potentially 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 the NCA and the operational military commanders about 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 involved parties as situations change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Our research shows that responses to conflict must be planned and conducted in such a way as to enhance the prospects for long-term peace and stability. A key aspect of operations is knowing when, where, and how to stop hostilities. However, there is a gap in the current JCS planning guidance that may result in planners inadvertently overlooking the importance of this factor during a fast moving crisis. Therefore, new guidance needs to be added to every phase of the JOPES crisis action planning system sections of the manual. Specific proposals are the following:

* Phase I (Situation Development). Include guidance that the theater commander’s assessment should incorporate thoughts about how to resolve the situation.

* Phase II (Crisis Assessment). Include guidance to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to query the NCA about termination criteria and to include the NCA’s termination guidance in the Warning order to facilitate the supported commander’s backwards planning.

* Phase III (COA Development). Include guidance that first, the theater commander must use the termination criteria from the Warning
Order to develop possible COAs. And, second, the CJCS will evaluate the CINC’s Estimate and recommended COA using the termination criteria before submission for NCA approval.

* Phase IV (COA Selection). Include guidance that the CJCS should reconfirm the termination criteria with the NCA. The CJCS should also review the criteria in either the Planning Order or the Alert Order to the theater commander

* Phase V (Execution Planning). Include guidance that the theater commander reevaluate the COA selected by the NCA in terms of the reconfirmed termination criteria. CINCs should, situation permitting, bring any shortfalls or limitations to the attention of the CJCS and the NCA before entering the next phase.

* Phase VI (Execution). Include guidance that the CJCS monitor the situation for potential changes in the applicability of the current termination criteria and communicate changes to all concerned parties.

These recommendations will help ensure that termination criteria are factored into the entire crisis planning process. Until this modification occurs, the United States will enter every crisis with a built-in handicap. The time to change JOPES is now.
ENDNOTES


2 Ibid., 60.

3 A search of the on-line catalog at the Armed Forces Staff College library revealed 37 books and articles written around the mid 1980s with an accelerating recent trend of interest in the 1990s. The selected bibliography highlights those sources which focused on the specific dimension of war termination criteria explored in this paper.


5 Ibid., 87-88.

6 Ibid., 88.

7 Harry G. Summers, Jr. "War: Deter, Fight, Terminate; The Purpose of War is a Better Peace." Naval War College Review, Jan-Feb 1986, 19.


16 Ibid., 404.


19 Ibid., 60.


21 Ibid., 34.

22 Joint Pub 5-0. Doctrine for Planning Joint Operations (Proposed Pub). (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, May 1993). It is important to note this is a publication still in the "Proposed Pub" stage of joint doctrine development and subject to change. As currently structured it provides only very basic guidance in generic terms.

23 Joint Pub 3-0. Doctrine for Joint Operations. (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 9 Sep 1993). Only chapter 2 fails to mention war termination criteria or post-conflict concerns. Numerous references to the topics are sprinkled throughout the rest of the publication with the three page discussion found from III-30 to III-32.

24 Ibid., I-11 to 1-12.

25 Ibid., III-30.
26 Joint Pub 5-03.1. Joint Operation Planning and Execution System Volume 1 (Planning Policies and Procedures). (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 4 Aug 1993), I-1. There are actually five volumes and supplements which address the various components of JOPES. Only Volume 1 covers the minimum content for crisis action planning procedures which, in the authors opinion, should address the areas where war termination criteria would fall if it had been properly covered. See I-2 and I-4.

27 Ibid., III-2.

28 Authors class notes on deliberate planning from AFSC Pub 1, G-4.

29 This is a paraphrase of the formal definition of 'crisis.' For the full definition see Joint Pub 5-03.1. Joint Operation Planning and Execution System Volume 1 (Planning Policies and Procedures). (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 4 Aug 1993), V-1.

30 Ibid., V-1.

31 Ibid., V-1.

32 Ibid., A-2-1.

33 Ibid., A-2-1 to A-2-2.

34 Ibid., A-2-2 to A-2-3.

35 Ibid., See all of Annex C.

36 Ibid., V-15.

37 Ibid., A-6-1 to A-6-2.


39 Ibid., 49-50.
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MEMORANDUM FOR WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

SUBJECT: Release of Collaborative Student Paper

1. The Commandant of the Armed Forces Staff College hereby releases the article entitled War termination criteria and JOPES: A dangerous omission in U.S. crisis action planning

by [Students’ Name, Rank, Service]
   1 Lieutenant Colonel Robert R. Soucy, II, USAF

   2 Major Kevin A. Shwedo, USA

   3 Major John S. Haven, II, USAF

for the purpose of submission to a military publisher of the authors’ choice.

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