U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara points to a map of Vietnam 26 April 1965 during a press conference in Washington, D.C. Strategic and operational planning for the conduct of the Vietnam War did not sufficiently describe an attainable end state that took into consideration the history or prevailing social and geoeconomic conditions of the divided nation. (Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress)

# Keep Your Eye on the Prize

## The Importance of Stability Operations

### Col. George F. Oliver, PhD, U.S. Army, Retired

*"You know you never defeated us on the battlefield," said the American colonel.*
*The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment. "That may be so," he replied, "but it is also irrelevant."*
—Conversation in Hanoi, April 1975

The epigraph has been explained in shorter, more direct terms by many about the Vietnam War: the United States won every battle but lost the war. Many military leaders now compare U.S. experiences in Vietnam with the most recent wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan and ponder how strategists and military operational planners can ensure the hard-fought war, costing both lives and money, is not lost.

Time must pass before a thorough examination of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is possible. For example, Harry Summers's book *On Strategy* (the source of this article's epigraph) was written in 1982, almost a decade after America lost the war in Vietnam. In time,

Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-07, also titled *Stability*, is even better.[1] Yet there is one lesson that needs far more emphasis: ensuring victory after the war concludes by taking decisive and robust steps to winning the peace through stability operations.

Unfortunately, as practical experience has shown, developing an understanding of how one can achievable an acceptable end state at the onset of a war is

> " A prolonged war that meanders away from an effort to identify and state objectives often indicates that political leaders did not do a thorough analysis of ends, ways, and means before initiating a conflict. "

scholars will do the same for both Afghanistan and Iraq. However, like the notion above, many believe the United States won every battle in Afghanistan and Iraq yet lost both wars. This raises the question of whether America kept its eye on the prize—the desired end state. For Operation Iraqi Freedom, at least, the answer may be yes. As this ugly war progresses, perhaps the coalition that took down Saddam Hussein may have succeeded. After all, though as yet unstable, immature, and inclined to widespread corruption, Iraq arguably does have a functioning democracy. Time will tell if it stabilizes and permanently takes root. The final outcome of Afghanistan is much more in doubt in terms of whether the wartime objective of establishing a democratic government will be realized.

Both give observers pause. Successful wars generally conclude as a result of some kind of stabilization operation. It is the quality of such an operation that really determines the ultimate success or failure of a war. Thus, understanding the character and scope of what kind of stability operation can be executed is key to achieving final victory in any war. More so than force-on-force warfare, stability operations are beset with complex problems well beyond the mere application of force. Having largely forgotten or ignored the lessons of stability operations from World War II and other previous wars, the American military has had to relearn a great deal about stability operations from its experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq. The 2016 Joint Publication (JP) 3-07, *Stability*, largely a product of our recent experience with war, is quite good, and the recently released Army

much harder than it sounds. Political leaders often do not want to make that prediction because wars and stability operations are fluid, and the environment in which they must be conducted is always changing. But a prolonged war that meanders away from an effort to identify and state objectives often indicates that political leaders did not do a thorough analysis of ends, ways, and means before initiating a conflict. Consequently, no matter what kind of war is being fought, it is imperative that military and civilian strategists and operational planners keep a focus on the desired end state—what the most senior leaders want the postconflict operational environment to look like when the war is over even if initially somewhat abstract.

## Operational Art and the End State

Operational art is at the very center of planning for war and subsequent combat operations. Military doctrine has taken many ideas from military theorists that can help planners devise major operations and campaigns to achieve victory in war. Such doctrine is taught in professional military education programs to enable future planners to devise effective approaches to future military operations. The study of history is a good supporting teacher for doctrine, and military leaders and strategists at all levels must reflect on the history of both armed conflict as well as stability operations to help avoid mistakes of the past and learn from good practices. It is important to emphasize that learning from previous postwar activities is just as important as learning from historical combat operations.

Additionally, any article written about operational art should pay homage to its pioneers, Sun Tzu and Carl von Clausewitz. Sun Tzu's short quips on the art of war clearly discuss what commanders must consider in the aftermath of armed conflict. In his chapter on the offense, Sun Tzu writes, "Generally in war the best policy is to take the state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this."[2] In another chapter, he writes, "Hence what is essential in war is victory, not prolonged operations. And therefore the general who understands war is the Minister of the people's fate and arbiter of the nation's destiny."[3] In these two short notes on warfare, he is clearly focused on what happens after combat. The people of the vanquished are key to success in war, and any commander who avoids the total destruction of society and protects the people greatly increases the likelihood of ultimately achieving victory.

Clausewitz has several dictums that relate to how to proceed in war. His often quoted phase, "War is not a mere act of policy, but a true political instrument, a continuation of policy by other means," should compel political leaders to think about the long-term ramifications of their policies.[4] In another chapter, Clausewitz focuses on the end state when he says, "No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war."[5] To increase the likelihood of ultimate success, leaders must be clear on the broad outlines of what they intend to achieve before embarking on military operations; there must be some vision of an end state, though obviously, the aspirations within such a vision might have to be modified as circumstances related to a war evolve.

B. H. Liddell Hart, a British historian and military theorist, is somewhat critical of Clausewitz's discussion of strategy and policy. Liddell Hart takes policy to a higher level, to that of governments. In his book *Strategy*, Liddell Hart criticizes the term "objective" used by Clausewitz by writing, "The term objective, although common usage, is not really a good one. It has a physical and geographical sense–and thus tends to confuse thought. It would be better to speak of 'the object' when dealing with the purpose of policy."[6] He goes further in another chapter:

> The object in war is a better state of peace—even if only from your own point of view. Hence it is essential to conduct war with constant regard to the peace you desire. This is the truth underlying Clausewitz's definition of war as a 'continuation of policy by

other means'—the prolongation of that policy through the war into the subsequent peace must always be borne in mind. If you concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after affect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war. This is a lesson supported by abundant experience.[7]
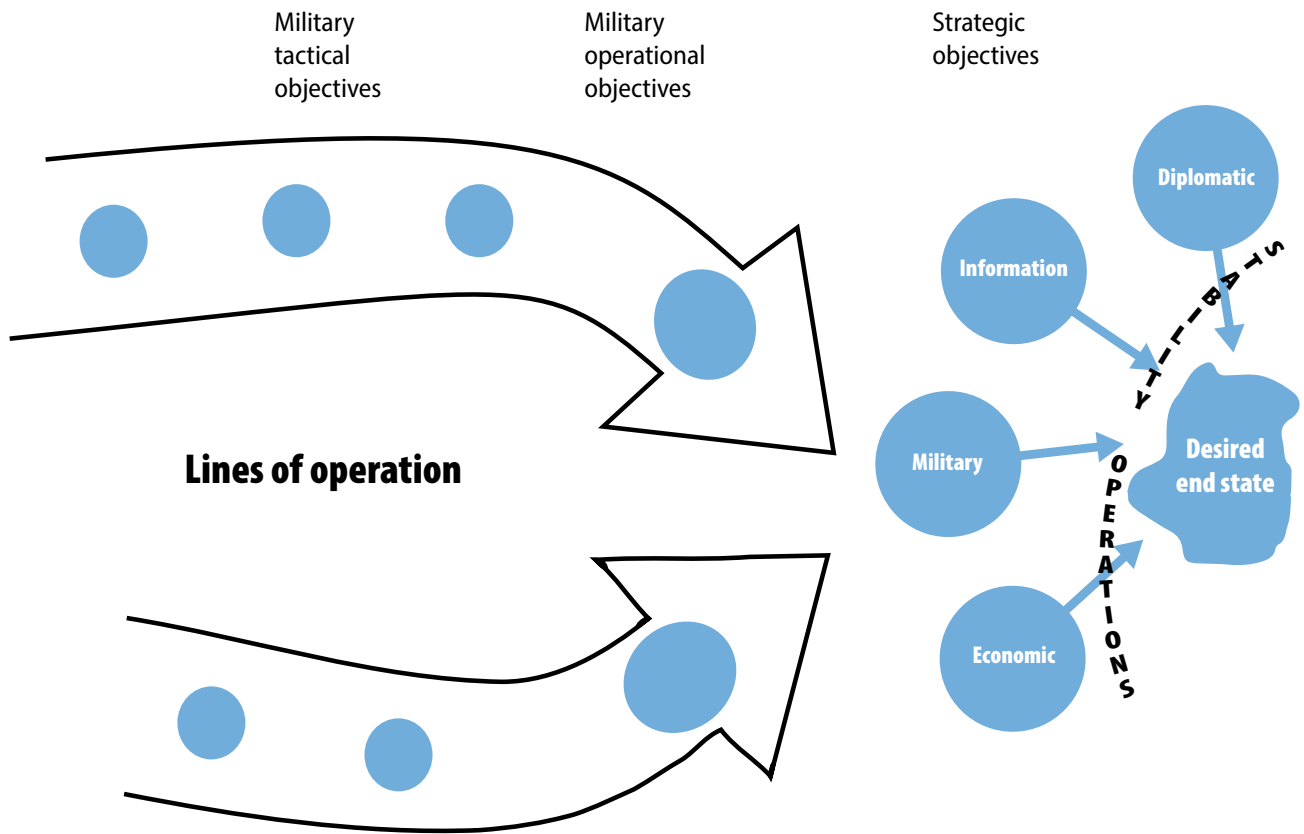
The theory of war has evolved over the centuries. Neither Sun Tzu nor Clausewitz directly discussed an envisioned end state promulgated by political leaders before the start of a war. Liddell Hart was more precise in discussing the role of political leaders by discussing policy, or the "object" of war. Clausewitz, however, was adamant on keeping one's focus on the objective. Does this mean the object, as Liddell Hart discusses, is a better peace? He is most likely talking about a clearly defined end state.

For over thirty years, Milan Vego of the U.S. Naval War College has studied, translated, and written extensively about operational art. His *Joint Operational Warfare: Theory and Practice* is probably the most comprehensive book on the subject. The introductory chapter, "On Operational Art," discusses the need for senior political leaders to consider a desired end state for any military operation or campaign.[8] In the chapter titled "Policy-Strategy-Operational Art Nexus," Vego writes, "The desired end state encompasses the political,

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Military tactical objectives

Military operational objectives

Strategic objectives

Diplomatic

Information

Military

Economic

HOSTILITIES

OPERATIONS

Desired end state

Lines of operation

(Figure by the U.S. Naval War College. This diagram is often used by instructors from the Joint Military Operations Department at the U.S. Naval War College to show the relationship of tactical, operational, and strategic objectives to the desired end state.)

## Figure 1. Relationship of Objectives and Desired End State

diplomatic, military, economic, social, ethnic, humanitarian and other considerations—or simply stated, 'the landscape'—the highest political leadership wants to exist or be created after the end of hostilities." He goes on: "Defining the desired end state requires a great deal of discussion among political and military leaders. Properly defined and understood, the desired strategic end state is a key prerequisite to determining the method, duration, and intensity of using one's available resources of military and nonmilitary power to accomplish a given military or theater-strategic objective."[9]

Vego stresses the need for political and senior military strategic planning leaders to define the desired end. This gives operational planners a focus and direction. Figure 1 depicts this relationship. In operational art, objectives are nested. Tactical objectives support the achievement of operational objectives, which in turn support attaining strategic objectives. Completing strategic objectives

should lead (in theory) to the desired end state. The converging lines toward the desired end state show the necessary whole-of-government approach for successful stability operations. Throughout *On War*, Clausewitz focuses on the objective, which can be either tactical or operational. Since all objectives support the attainment of a higher-level objective, these objectives lead to an end state. Ideally, the envisioned end state should be clear to all leaders up and down the chain of command.

However, obtaining a clear vision of a desired end state, as Vego writes, is very hard to do. End states evolve and change over the course of the war, and often, political leaders delay describing what they want the world, region, or country to look like after the fighting has stopped. Nonetheless, Vego asserts that in war, defining the end state is difficult but necessary. That is why the desired end state is depicted in figure 1 as an open curve—a broad idea of a desired

end state. Vego describes several historical examples. The Allies had only a vague idea of what they wanted Europe to look like when they launched Operation Overlord. The same was true for Desert Storm, Allied Force, and Enduring Freedom.[10] Yet, to clarify Vego's assertion, political leaders in all of these wars developed more clearly defined aspirational end states as the wars progressed.

To be fair, as Vego describes, it is hard to predict the outcome in war. This is the reason Helmuth von Moltke the Elder said, "No plan of operations extends with any certainty beyond the first contact with the main hostile force."[11] It also may be the reason Gen. Dwight Eisenhower repeated on several occasions this quote from an anonymous soldier, "Plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."[12] Both these quotes are often used by military scholars and leaders. They both apply to warfare yet aptly relate to stability operations. Clausewitz's fog and friction in warfare result in unexpected changes; both Moltke and Eisenhower were basically saying the same thing. That is, thorough planning allows the commander to alter his or her plans to meet the unforeseen changes. This thorough planning also ensures that the commander can remain focused on the objective and not be sidetracked to other more attractive objectives that might not be nested with the initial lines of effort.

Senior political leaders and military commanders can easily extrapolate this meaning for stabilization operations as well—no plan survives the initial discussions with the host nation. When conducting stabilization operations, the host nation must be involved in the discussions on an end state. This calls to mind Sun Tzu's idea that commanders become ministers of the peoples' fate.

Political leaders must also be immersed in thinking through their policies and strategies before wars start. This was the thesis of Gen. Tony Zinni's book *Before the First Shots are Fired*: "Few Americans realize how many essential pieces have to fall into place before Johnny goes marching off to war, or how much these pieces drive success or failure after he deploys 'over there.'"[13]

Planning up front for the desired end state keeps military forces and civilian agencies (when the right time comes) focused on their task, or as Liddell Hart says, on the object (end state). Also, because of the fluid nature of military operations, it is all the more likely that the end state will be fluid too. Thus, as the war unfolds, so too must the desired end state. This was certainly true during World War II and Vietnam.

Another factor involving predicting an end state for military commanders is the interaction with other allies. Throughout history, America has rarely fought a war alone. Each allied nation will have a different view of what it wants the future environment to look like. This requires the allies to pull together and come up with a common vision. Such was the case during World War II. Allied conferences in Quebec, Casablanca, and Yalta yielded almost a common view of where the war was headed, if not a desired end state—that came later, much later.

If military planners are developing potential war plans for their senior political leaders, then they should ask what they want the state, region, etc., to look like when the fighting has ceased. In other words, what does victory look like? If political leaders do not quantifiably outline what they envision the future landscape to look like, then military leaders and planners should propose the features of a desired end state. Ignoring the essential planning element of describing a desired end state before the war begins may lead to winning every battle and losing the war. The old saying comes to mind, "If you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there." In fact, Zinni used this very same old adage in his book. He stresses that senior political leaders must think through ends, ways, and means in achieving a political objective.[14] Failure to do so leads not only to a waste of resources—both men and money—but also to failure itself.

Wars are fluid, and the enemy gets a vote. And in stabilization operations, the local people get a vote. Stability operations are wicked problems and complex adaptive systems where human interactions cause the situation to change. Failure to take this into account might lead to an insurgency or a prolonged war. So as operations in a particular country unfold, strategic leaders should revisit their desired end state and alter it accordingly. This was certainly the case for the vision of Europe from 1942 to 1946. The same was true in Iraq from 2003 to 2011.

## Military Doctrine on Stabilization

Current U.S. military doctrine has taken the concepts of theorists discussed earlier to heart and crafted into both warfare doctrine and stabilization doctrine the concept of understanding the end state. Army and joint

publications have over the last three decades embraced the concepts of operational art. Yet, more recently, the inclusion of a desired end state before the first shots are fired has gained new attention.

The events of 11 September 2001 caused the U.S. military to intervene first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq. By most accounts, the planning for the postconflict phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom did not go well.[15] The inadequate planning and faulty assumptions consequently stimulated a number of studies within the U.S. government. The first report was the *Defense Science Board 2004 Summer Study on Transition to and from Hostilities*.[16] This study resulted in a Department of Defense (DOD) directive that stated, "Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support."[17]

With activities in Iraq making front-page news daily and with this new DOD directive, articles, books, and studies about stability operations flourished. In short order, these ideas gained traction and evolved into a workable set of ideas that soon became military doctrine. JP 3-07, *Stability Operations*, was first published in 2011, with a revised version titled *Stability* published in 2016. In combination with international efforts toward peacebuilding (a synonym for stability operations), excellent concepts emerged to either help fragile and failing states avoid war or help nations recover from war. The approach to stabilization, as described in the Army's latest doctrine, includes "a safe and secure environment, an established rule of law, social well-being, stable government, and a sustainable economy."[18] These five lines of effort have gained international recognition as ways to help fragile or failed states.

When focusing on an end state, the current version of JP 3-07 states, "During stability actions, commanders achieve unity of effort across the stability sectors by focusing all activities toward a shared understanding of the desired end state. The end state focuses on the conditions required to support a secure lasting peace: a viable economy; and a legitimate HN [host nation] government capable of maintaining its legitimacy by meeting the expectations of its citizens and protecting its population and territory."[19]

ADP 3-07, *Stability*, discusses the desired end state with some clarity: "In operations dominated by offensive and defensive tasks, the end state is generally quantifiable and well defined in terms of enemy forces and time. Stabilization is a long-term effort and can only be achieved by integrating the collective actions of all instruments of national power, not by a single instrument applied in isolation."[20]

As the new ideas unfolded on stability operations, the military doctrine and the concepts in other U.S. government agencies and departments clearly saw that stability operations could be conducted across the spectrum of conflict—in peace, war, and postwar.[21] To fully integrate all instruments of national power and incorporate all relevant U.S. agencies and departments into stability operations planning and activities, in 2017 and 2018, the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the DOD completed a stabilization assistance review (SAR). The SAR reviewed articles and reports, analyzed eight current and past U.S. engagements in conflict-affected countries, and conducted interviews with experts. The review also sent questionnaires to the six DOD combatant commands. The result was a new document endorsed by the DOD, Department of State, and USAID called *A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of the U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict Affected Areas*.[22]

The report acknowledges, "The United States has strong national security and economic interests in reducing the level of violence and promoting stability in areas affected by armed conflict."[23] Yet it goes on to
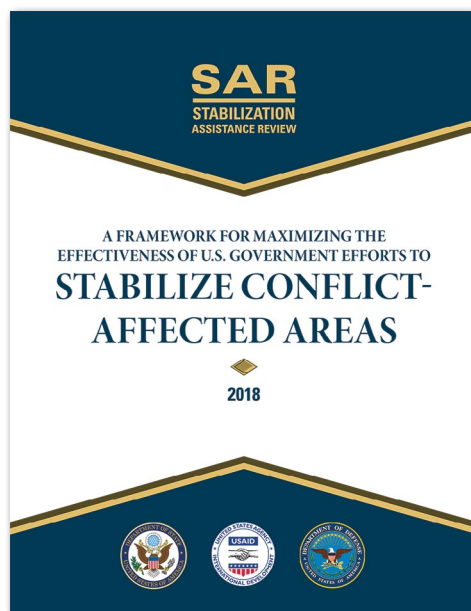
To view the Department of Defense, Department of State, and U.S. Agency for International Development endorsed document, *A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of the U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict Affected Areas*, please visit https://media.defense.gov/2018/Jun/13/2001931133/-1/-1/1/stabilization-assistance-review.pdf.

Walt Whitman Rostow (*far right*) shows (*from left to right*) Press Secretary George Christian, President Lyndon B. Johnson, and Gen. Robert Ginsberg a model of the Khe Sanh area of Vietnam 15 February 1968 in the White House Situation Room, Washington, D.C. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

say the United States has "no appetite to repeat large-scale reconstruction efforts." The report also provides a new definition of stabilization: "A political endeavor to create conditions where locally legitimate authorities and systems can peaceably manage conflict and prevent a resurgence of violence."[24] (Consider this a link back to Clausewitz's war is a continuation of policy.)

The Department of State, specifically the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, has the lead for planning U.S. support to conflict affected countries. The USAID is the implementing partner, and the DOD provides a supporting role. A set of core principles outlined in the report are essentially lessons from the past, yet focus more on lessons from the last eighteen years of conducting stabilization operations.

The *National Security Strategy* and the *National Defense Strategy*, published in 2017 and 2018, respectively, refocused the U.S. military toward near-peer competitors.[25] In anticipation of this new focus, the Army published its latest version of Field Manual 3-0, *Operations*.[26] In this new operations manual, the Army drifted away from previous doctrine where the Army conducted offense, defense, and stability operations. This new manual now focused on

offense, defense, and consolidating gains. The discussion on consolidating gains confused many, and there was some concern that the ideas of stabilization would fade.

To clarify what the Army meant by consolidating gains, former commander of the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, Lt. Gen. Michael Lundy, and three others published an article in *Military Review* titled "Three Perspectives on Consolidating Gains." The article traces the military history of the U.S. Army in stability operations. The authors direct their discussion on consolidating gains into tactical, operational, and strategic viewpoints. In the section "The Operational Artist's View," they state, "Planning to consolidate gains is integral to prevailing in armed conflict. Any campaign that does not account for the requirement to consolidate gains is either a punitive expedition or likely to result in protracted war. The

A German worker shovels debris in 1949 as part of construction efforts in West Berlin, Germany. The sign reads, "Emergency Program Berlin with the help of the Marshall Plan." Marshall Plan aid to Germany totaled $1,390,600 and enabled the country to rise from the ashes of defeat, as symbolized by this worker in West Berlin. Even a year before the end of the Marshall Plan in 1951, Germany had surpassed its prewar industrial production level. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

planning must therefore account for the desired end state of military operations and work backward."[27]

It was good to see the authors of this article refer to operational art and the desired end state. Keeping the military focus on the end state is critical to success in any operation, especially stability operations. Backward planning from the end state is the key to any good military campaign or major operation.

Recently, in July 2019, the Army released ADP 3-07 along with ADP 3-0, *Operations*.[28] These two documents add a more thorough discussion on consolidating gains and its relationship to stability operations. The new documents reiterate that land forces of the United States focus on offense, defense, and stability operations.

ADP 3-07 is a good document that incorporates many of the ideas learned about stability operations in the last fifteen years. Both ADP 3-0 and ADP 3-07 help focus the Army on prospective missions. The stability tasks outlined in figure 2 reflect the kinds of missions the Army might have to accomplish. A prominent lesson highlighted in the doctrine is incorporating not only other U.S. government agencies and departments but also activities from organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank, regional organizations, and nongovernmental organizations.

In addition, the recent SAR clearly shows that stabilization is a whole-of-government effort. In April 2019, Rep. Eliot Engel introduced a congressional bill called the Global Fragility Act. This bill passed in the House of Representatives, and at the time of this writing, is awaiting debate in the Senate. According to a summary of the bill, "The State Department shall select priority countries and regions that are particularly at risk, and report to Congress a 10-year plan for each. Each plan shall include information including descriptions of goals, plans for reaching such goals, and benchmarks for measuring progress."[29] If signed into law, the bill would support, with funds, the activities outlined in the SAR. The bill acknowledges that stability operations are a whole-of-government effort and can occur throughout the spectrum of conflict. Like the SAR, however, its focus is on preventing violent conflict and supporting fragile states emerging from conflict.[30]

## Historical Examples

The following three examples—post-World War II Germany, Vietnam, and Iraq—demonstrate how a clearly defined end state helped U.S. war efforts.

- **Establish civil security**
- **Support to civil control**
- **Restore essential services**
- **Support to governance**
- **Support to economic and infrastructure development**
- **Conduct security cooperation**

(Figure from Army Doctrine Publication 3-07, *Stability*, July 2019)

### Figure 2. Army Stability Tasks

**Post-World War II Germany.** As Eisenhower's planners were developing plans for the invasion of Europe into Normandy, a separate planning staff headed by British Lt. Gen. Frederick Morgan started working on postwar plans.[31] These plans were guided by political discussions among the heads of state of the Allied powers. Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt met several times over the course of the war to determine guidance on the war for their military commanders. Although Joseph Stalin did not attend the first couple of meetings, Churchill and Roosevelt were in communication with him. Ideas for postwar Europe emerged from these meetings that provided planners some information to begin preparations, but it was an incomplete vision of what Europe would look like after the war. Each time the heads of state met, the postwar plan changed. At the second Quebec Conference, U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Hans Morgenthau presented his views. Because Germany rebounded after World War I, Morgenthau recommended that Germany be compelled to become an agrarian state with little or no industrial capacity.[32] This vision was accepted by Churchill, but there was much disagreement within Roosevelt's cabinet.

The leading opponent to the Morgenthau Plan was U.S. Secretary of War Henry Stimson. Eventually a watered-down version of the Morgenthau Plan resulted in the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) issuing JCS Directive 1067 to Eisenhower in April 1945.[33] Ideas for postwar Germany were altered by decisions in the Allied Control Council and the Potsdam Conference. Eventually, one year after Germany surrendered, the JCS issued a new directive, JCS 1779. This new directive combined the zones of occupation of France, Britain, and the United States and was the basis for a West German nation.[34]

The full recovery of Europe would not take place until Secretary of State George C. Marshall outlined his ideas under the Marshall Plan at a speech in 1947.

However, even the Marshall Plan evolved in the course of its implementation. Yet the plan was a whole-of-government effort to rebuild Western Europe. Some scholars consider the Marshall Plan to be the greatest foreign policy effort of the United States in the twentieth century. For example, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger said of the Marshall Plan,

> Every generation requires a vision before it can build its own reality. But no generation can rest on the laurels of its predecessors; each needs to make a new effort adapted to its own conditions. In Europe, the Marshall Plan helped consolidate nations whose political legitimacy had evolved over centuries. Once stabilized, those nations could move on to designing a more inclusive, cooperative order.[35]

Essentially, postwar Germany did not follow the theory on how to proceed with helping a nation recover from war through stability operations. Initially, only the destruction of the Wehrmacht (the German defense force) was envisioned. The complex ideas of an end state for Germany and Europe took much longer to develop. Still, it was necessary for political leaders to come up with a vision so the entire whole of government could proceed to total victory.

**Vietnam.** Political guidance is more essential in limited wars, and the Vietnam War was a classic case of a limited war. The United States wanted to halt the communist expansion so it drew a line in the sand between North and South Vietnam. Ultimately, President Lyndon Johnson wanted to defeat the enemy and force them back into North Vietnam.

Both Presidents Johnson and Richard Nixon saw pacification and the strengthening of the Vietnamese military forces as a way to win the war. However, neither of these strategic objectives were visions of an end state. Johnson did not publicly outline an end state for the war in Vietnam.[36] Yet in discussions with Robert Komer, who in 1966 served briefly as Johnson's national security adviser, Johnson "wanted to make Vietnam a showcase of economic, social, and political development in Asia."[37] This was more of an end state.

Johnson named Komer the czar of pacification in the spring of 1966. This meant Komer would tackle the other war in Vietnam—the fight against the Viet Cong to bring all of the country under the leadership of the South Vietnamese government. After leaving the National Security Council, Komer headed to Vietnam to manage the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) pacification program. CORDS was a whole-of-government approach to restoring control and legitimacy to the rural villages all over Vietnam. Johnson picked Komer because he got things done. Unofficially, he was known as "Blowtorch Bob." By 1970, according to Richard Stewart, because of Komer's CORDS program, "93 percent of South Vietnamese lived in 'relatively secure' towns and villages, an increase of 20 percent from the middle of 1968."[38]

Although statistics may be misleading, many studies have shown the CORDS was successful and truly a whole of the U.S. government effort. The program also had strong support from the South Vietnamese government. In the CORDS program, civilians made up 20 percent of the eight thousand leader and staff positions, while the DOD provided the remainder. However, civilians held 50 percent of the key leadership positions.[39]

When Nixon came into office, his national security team met in July 1969 to discuss the war. According to Henry Kissinger, the national security adviser at the time, the administration developed a new mission statement for Gen. Creighton Abrams Jr., the military assistance command–Vietnam commander: "The new mission statement (which went into effect on August 15) focused on providing 'maximum assistance' to the South Vietnamese to strengthen their forces, supporting pacification efforts, and reducing the flow of supplies to the enemy."[40] Again, this was not a particularly good end state.

**Next page top:** Bill Graham (*right*) discusses a project to reopen the Thạnh Phú Village canal January 1970 in Châu Thành District, Vietnam. Dredging for the U.S. 9th Division's Đồng Tâm Base Camp had filled in the canal, and the Army refused to help dig it out. Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) aid including in-kind money and surplus food commodities was used to compensate villagers for digging out the silt. The canal was nearly a kilometer long and took about three months to finish. (Photo courtesy of the American Foreign Service Association/*The Foreign Service Journal*, http://afsa.org/sites/default/files/flipping_book/0415/files/assets/basic-html/page-1.html)

**Next page bottom:** An undated photo of a CORDS office in Châu Đốc, Vietnam. (Photo courtesy of the James Nelson Tull Collection, The Vietnam Center and Sam Johnson Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University, VA067961)

President George W. Bush meets with his national security and communications advisors 19 March 2003 after authorizing military operations against Iraq. Present (*from left to right*) were Steve Hadley, deputy national security advisor; Karen Hughes, special advisor to the president; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Richard B. Myers; Dan Bartlett, communications director; Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld; National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice; and Secretary of State Colin Powell. (Photo by Eric Draper, Official White House Archives)

In a review of several books including Kissinger's *The White House Years*, Harry Summers's *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War*, and Gary Hess's *Presidential Decisions for War: Korea, Vietnam and Persian Gulf*, there was no insight into a desired end state for Vietnam after the war. Even a review of Johnson's national security action memoranda failed to uncover a clear end state. Yet, because Komer had a personal relationship with Johnson, he understood the president's vision of an end state and set out to accomplish it.

Vietnam had other problems that might have caused America to lose the war. However, as the senior leader orchestrating the pacification program in Vietnam, Komer kept his eye on the prize: a democratic government where villages could live freely and unthreatened by the Viet Cong.

**Iraq.** Operation Iraqi Freedom is another historical example where perhaps a clearly defined end state helped the war effort. There are numerous books, articles, and blogs about America's failure in the operation. However, when looking at end states, perhaps America did better than many think.

In October 2002, five months before the war against Saddam Hussein began, President George W. Bush released a paper crafted by Condoleezza Rice titled "Principal's Committee Review of Iraq Policy Paper." In this paper, the United States' goals were outlined as "an Iraq that:

- does not threaten its neighbors;
- renounces support for, and sponsorship of, international terrorism;
- continues to be a single, unitary state;
- is free of weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and associated programs;
- no longer oppresses or tyrannizes its people;

- respects the basic rights of all Iraqis—including women and minorities;
- adheres to the rule of law and respects fundamental human rights, including freedom of speech and worship; and
- encourages the building of democratic institutions."[41]

On the surface, this looks like a well-crafted end state. It is clearly a vision on what Bush wanted Iraq to be when the war was over. Since many are familiar with what happened in Iraq, the readers can draw their own conclusions on whether this end state was achieved. But in my opinion, most of these goals were met.

## Peacetime End States

Stability operations, according to U.S. military doctrine, happen in peacetime as well. Military units conducting security cooperation activities in countries that support U.S. policy interests or are in competition with other near-peer competitors might have military, aid, and development programs organized by the U.S. ambassadors to those countries. These programs or military exercises are designed to achieve long-term U.S. goals.

During peacetime, there most likely will be limited strategic guidance for a particular country. The U.S. ambassador to that country, however, normally has a vision on what he or she wants to accomplish published in the embassy's Integrated Country Strategy. According to the Department of State website, ambassadors are required to conduct an in-country assessment, review the *National Security Strategy*, consult with the Department of State's regional bureau chief, and develop their own strategic plan.[42] For example, the U.S. ambassador's plan for Ukraine provides a good end state:

> A strong, resilient, and diplomatically engaged Ukraine, with a strong military, security agencies and border guards, partners with the United States to contribute to regional stability, resist Russian multi-dimensional aggression, and respond effectively to domestic and transnational global threats, such as illicit migration and pandemics, thereby protecting Americans in Ukraine and in the homeland and keeping the Russian threat farther from NATO's borders.[43]

This excellent end state allows U.S. departments and agencies to develop plans to achieve this vision.

It makes sense for leaders conducting theater security cooperation programs in a particular country to review the ambassador's Integrated Country Strategy for that country. The same holds true for the USAID or any other U.S. government agency representatives operating in a particular country. Programs in a particular country, in order to be cost effective and fit within the *National Security Strategy*, should be in line with the ambassador's end state.

## Conclusion

If the U.S. military is to be victorious in war and not just win battles, leaders from the national level down through at least the operational level of war must follow the advice of Clausewitz: do not start or engage in a war unless you know what you want to accomplish by the end of that war. This means that senior leaders, whether they be civilian or military, must provide some sort of vision on what the operational environment should look like when the fighting is over. It is highly likely that this end state will change during the conduct of the war, but it is essential that some initial direction with regard to objectives to be accomplished be given before the first shots are fired.

Even in limited wars, a desired end state keeps military commanders and civilian agencies focused and reduces the commitment of resources to achieve victory. Serious thought and debate by both senior political and military leaders is a necessity for the development of a clear end state. If political leaders do not provide such intellectual thinking on an end state, military commanders should ask for one or, in the absence of one given, take the initiative to develop one and send it up the chain for consideration of approval. This end state will be very important as the conflict moves from cessation of armed conflict to the more arduous stabilization operation.

In peacetime, having a vague idea of a vision on what must be accomplished is good, but on commencement of hostilities one must take the next step and describe in greater detail the desired features of an end state. This will allow all elements of national power to share a common intent and put limited resources to good use. Security cooperation is a form of stabilization operations that can contribute to achieving a desired end state.

During any interagency effort, whether war or peace, planners must keep their eyes on the prize—the desired end state. In summary, the doctrinal ideas concerning the role of the military in stability operations have evolved into a workable and effective aggregation, and U.S. government policy has evolved as well. It is now incumbent

upon the military to ensure that the importance of stability operations planning stemming from agreement on the details of end states is inculcated into military as essential for achieving ultimate victory in war. ∎

# Notes

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Flanked by Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger (*hands folded at right*), Gen. Douglas MacArthur (*center*) takes questions from reporters 30 August 1945 shortly after his arrival at Atsugi Airfield, Japan. (Photo courtesy of the National Archives)

## Operation Blacklist

Recognizing the conflict between the United States and Japan could be reignited if an effective pacification program was not conducted expeditiously following the official Japanese surrender in 1945, Gen. Douglas MacArthur developed and oversaw Operation Blacklist, a detailed and comprehensive plan for economic development and social engineering that incorporated direct involvement of the emperor and other prestigious Japanese leaders. MacArthur's key priorities for the occupation and pacification plan included the establishment of a free press, a free labor movement, and separation of church and state. To view MacArthur's complete personal report, *MacArthur in Japan, The Occupation: Military Phase,* please visit https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/MacArthur%20Reports/MacArthur%20V1%20Sup/.