AND THE CLOCKS WERE STRIKING THIRTEEN: THE TERMINATION OF WAR

James L. Foster and Garry D. Brewer

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James L. Foster and Garry D. Brewer
The Rand Corporation and Yale University

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ABSTRACT

Historians, military analysts and defense policy critics have concentrated almost exclusively on the issues of war initiations, war conduct, and the requirements of deterrence, while ignoring the questions of how wars end and how pre-war policies may affect the ability to terminate a potential war on acceptable terms and at acceptable costs. This paper addresses these questions, first by critiquing the assumptions about war termination associated with theories of deterrence and limited war, and, secondly, by proposing a framework within which to assess the necessary conditions for as well as the constraints on the formulation of effective war termination strategies.

Deterrence and limited war theories suggest three alternative conditions, each implying a particular strategy of force employment, as sufficient for achieving acceptable war termination: (1) attrition of the adversary's warfighting capabilities or will; (2) protracted stalemate; or (3) imposing or threatening unacceptable damage to the adversary to change his perception of the potential costs and benefits of continuing the conflict. A review of the recent history of armed conflict indicates the limitations affecting pursuit of concerted strategies to establish these conditions, and, furthermore, indicates that these conditions, if they can be established, do not translate into termination decisions in the manner assumed by deterrence and limited war theorists. The major and persistently revealed constraints on the pursuit of effective termination strategies have been: the determination of pre-war force posture and force employment doctrine in terms of deterrence and war initiation concepts rather than in terms of war termination strategies; the failure of political leaderships to define their war termination objectives such that ends and means can be related; and the discontinuity in war policy-making by which war initiation, war conduct and termination are distinct and unrelated decisions, reached by different processes and based on differing purposes and assessments of costs and benefits.
In light of these characteristics of pre-war preparations and wartime policymaking, the review of past conflicts suggests an alternative formulation of the conditions necessary to achieve war termination. Based on these notions, current U.S. force posture, force employment doctrines and assumptions about the requirements for controlling the conduct of war are evaluated in terms of their appropriateness in pursuing war termination strategies. Finally, an agenda of additional issues related to the development of war termination strategies is proposed along with suggestions for addressing them analytically.

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INTRODUCTION

The causes and the conduct of war have fascinated scholars since the beginning of recorded history; however, surprisingly little attention has been given to the problem of how wars are ended. This oversight is apparent not only in historical accounts of warfare but, more importantly, in contemporary analyses and doctrinal formulations of deterrence and overall defense policies. Just as historians have focused on how wars begin and are fought, military analysts and planners have concentrated on influencing the initiation and conduct of warfare rather than on analyzing the process and requirements for terminating warfare on acceptable terms and at acceptable costs.

While our understanding of conventional war termination is not well developed, at least some descriptive analyses of that process have been done, there is a rich history on which to base analyses, and historical experience supports the assumption that conventional war can be terminated short of mutual exhaustion or annihilation. The state of the art for analyzing nuclear war termination is quite different. There are no historical precedents, and nowhere in the literature of nuclear warfare is the termination problem systematically addressed. Scholars, in emphasizing the differences between conventional and nuclear warfare, routinely suggest that there is no interesting terminal point to nuclear war short of mutual annihilation. Indeed, they appear to feel that this likelihood should be maintained because the development of concepts and capabilities for limiting nuclear war might make nuclear war more likely. Military strategists seem to be satisfying this desire in their continuing emphasis on nuclear war's prevention through deterrence, to the point of intellectual sterility, while the possibilities and requirements for limiting, deescalating and terminating nuclear war receive little attention. This emphasis has been a mixed blessing. The United States

*Ignorance of the life cycle through which policies, including those related to war, ordinarily traverse has been endemic in public policy analysis. See Garry D. Brewer, "The Policy Sciences Emerge: To Nurture and Structure a Discipline," Policy Sciences, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September 1974), pp. 239-44.
has maintained an effective deterrence posture. However, deterrence thinking has insured that potentially warring parties will have the wherewithal to obliterate one another and has focused attention on oblation as the single response to a nuclear attack.

THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM

What is meant by the term war termination? Clearly, it is not interesting to define it merely as the cessation of armed hostilities. After all, that condition can come as the result of annihilation or complete exhaustion of one or both or, in the nuclear age, of all sides. And, the achievement of annihilation or exhaustion does not require much thought about the ending of the war; indeed, they are outcomes likely to result from a lack of thought about outcomes and from the blind pursuit of more and more destructive weapons. The only interesting outcomes of war are those which reflect the achievement of reasonable political objectives--those requiring less than all-out use of force--using the minimum necessary force. In this light, we will refer to war termination as the cessation of armed hostilities by political choice, short of all-out warfare.

It is abundantly clear from the historical record that the termination of war is a complex process and that process varies in its purposes and details from one case to the next. However, understanding that it is a process leads to a search for strategies, rather than for particular terms or conditions, related to successful termination. The problem to be addressed in this paper, therefore, is the need to formulate principles on which to base termination strategies that relate military means to political ends and that enhance the probability of ending armed conflict at the earliest possible time and with the least possible costs in blood and iron.

War termination as defined here is essentially a problem of modern warfare--the form of warfare that emerged with the Napoleonic Wars. Prior to that time, a number of fortuitous conditions existed which, even without conscious effort, operated to limit warfare and to encourage early termination or termination before significant or devastating damage had been inflicted on the societies involved. In terms
of military capabilities, armies were small, arms were relatively simple, and technology was very slow to change; and rates of mobilization and deployment were slow. These conditions meant that war was slow moving, with total destruction related more to the duration of the conflict than to its intensity. This allowed plenty of time for political leaderships to reconsider their decisions, to form or alter alliances and to take other diplomatic moves, and to negotiate with the adversary before substantial destruction had been done. The political incentives to seek limited objectives and to terminate wars early were also strong. The universality of the monarchical system meant that adversaries had common political ideology and structure. Therefore, the aims of war were, typically, limited to marginal changes in the control of territory and resources, not the elimination of competing political systems or ideological movements. Furthermore, over time, as military capabilities improved and socio-economic change occurred, the monarchies came to fear that major war would lead to an unraveling of the monarchical system and this fear encouraged the pursuit of limited war aims and strategies.*

The Napoleonic Wars changed these conditions irreversibly. The "nation-at-arms" meant large armies, and "popular" warfare meant that public attitudes and emotions were a constraint on politically-imposed limits on warfare. Furthermore, the rapid technological developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries meant that the pace and destructive potential of warfare were greatly increased. And, a diversity of political ideologies and structures raised the problems of incompatible values and of competing expansionist motives. Thus, while the natural limits on warfare were disappearing, the incentives and capacity for imposing political control on warfare were diminishing.

In the post-World War II period, spurred by the developments of nuclear weapons, the concern with limiting the destructiveness of war led to the development of concepts and related military capabilities

for conducting limited war. * These developments were inspired, most directly, by the Eisenhower Administration's reliance on "massive retaliation" by nuclear weapons as the basic deterrent threat. This all-or-nothing threat not only ignored the problem of terminating warfare but, by the very extremity of the act, served to reduce the credibility of the threat as a deterrent. The alternative to this approach suggested by limited war advocates was the development of conventional warfare capabilities for meeting a range of military contingencies in a limited and controlled manner that matched the nature of the military threat encountered. While in theory, as well as in practice, the notion of limited warfare has served to constrain the scope and destructiveness of wars fought in the post-World War II period, it has never been linked to a notion of how to terminate those wars. The major incidents of war in that period, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, remained limited but both involved prolonged, stalemate conflict in which termination negotiations went on for years without apparent gains from the continued fighting.

This brief historical review indicates the principal changes in the context in which war termination must be considered and also suggests the necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for effective termination strategies. Those requirements include:

- Effective political control
- Clear and limited political objectives
- Force postures responsive to control and providing incentives for limitation rather than escalation
- War-fighting concepts and strategies intended to encourage limitation and early termination

Given the complexity of modern armaments, the long lead times of force development and acquisition, and the rapid pace of warfare and

consequent importance of forces-in-being, it is clear that the derivation of these conditions cannot await the decision to initiate war involvement, let alone await the terminal phase of war. Insofar as these conditions are understood to be necessary for effective conduct of war, they can be expected to direct the peacetime development of military capabilities. However, these conditions are not sufficient if they are not self-consciously linked to termination strategies; that is, limited war-fighting strategies and capabilities, though they may limit the risks and costs of war, are relevant and useful only insofar as they are consistent with termination strategies.

Termination strategies involve definition of military conditions and the means for achieving them that are consistent with and likely to produce political outcomes acceptable to both sides of a conflict. More implicit than explicit in the limited war literature are two kinds of termination strategies. Both are based on the assumption that the adversary is a rational actor who can be "convinced" on the basis of cost-benefit calculations that the political terms offered are preferred to continuing the conflict. One strategy is that of "stalemate" whereby the intent is to demonstrate that one side is more willing or more able to accept the costs of continuing the war over the long run.* This was essentially the strategy employed in the Vietnam War; the problem was that, while the U.S. was potentially capable of paying the costs over the long run, the American people were not willing to pay. The second strategy is that of coercive exploitation of superior capabilities to demonstrate to the adversary that the costs of continuing the war will far outweigh the potential benefits.** The bombing of North Vietnam, at least initially, was such a coercive effort; but the North Vietnamese demonstrated repeatedly that they were able and willing to match the U.S. at each new level of escalatory effort.

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**This is the theme of Schelling, *op. cit.*
indeed that they were able to control the level of action by controlling the number and size of engagements from their sanctuaries.

In the following section we will demonstrate the limitations of these war termination strategies, limitations which stem, in large part, from implicit and erroneous assumptions about the nature of the policymaking process in war. While limited war concepts have promoted the development of two of the four preconditions for effective war termination strategies—limited war-fighting strategies and limited war capabilities—they do not take account of the repeatedly exhibited constraints on political control and the definition of political objectives.

AN APPRECIATION OF THE WAR PROCESS: CONSTRAINTS ON TERMINATION STRATEGIES

At least since the time of Clausewitz, students of war have intoned that wars tend to become ends in themselves in the absence of clear-cut political objectives, with the familiar result that military operations usually aim to achieve total military victory. Clausewitz was afraid that, as modern armies grew in size and power, the tendency to pursue military victory blindly would lead to even greater destruction without any discernible political purpose. A more contemporary expression of this fear was made by Khrushchev to President Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis: "If indeed war should break out, then it would not be in our power to stop it, for such is the logic of war."** While this fear may be well-placed, it is also true that the incidents of war since World War II have been significantly limited in terms of geography, weapons used, and number of participants; and those conflicts have been terminated well short of exhaustion or annihilation for either side.

That these happy outcomes have occurred does not mean that there has been effective political control of war policymaking nor that war has been self-consciously directed to the achievement of political ends. The following analysis of the war policymaking process indicates how

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wars have been limited and terminated without those presumed prerequisites. The analysis divides the process into three phases to show how policymaking and its motivations differ over the course of a war and illustrates the degree to which the decisions made in each phase are disconnected from those made in other phases. That is, the formulation of termination objectives, strategies, and decisions tends to be disassociated from decisions on war initiation and on the conduct of military operations.

**War Initiation**

One hopes that, in the modern age, war is undertaken only with great reluctance, given the potential destruction and great uncertainties about its outcome. One must be less sanguine that, in spite of the risks and uncertainties, a decision to go to war will be based on a clear-cut definition of a desired political outcome or on a calculation of the most likely or least costly means of achieving that outcome. Instead, going to war is usually perceived as a "miserable" alternative chosen by policymakers as a last resort; it is not a decision typically reached by optimistic calculations that a particularly advantageous outcome can be achieved with high confidence and at acceptable costs.

This may be a self-evident conclusion in the case of nations aggressed against. However, even in the case of revolutionary or ideologically expansionist states this prescription usually holds. The revolutionary state feels compelled to expand to protect its revolutionary base, to defend its borders by preemptive actions to control bordering territory, or to eliminate threatening political entities. Similarly, an ideologically expansionist state may feel forced to aggress in order to fulfill its ideological vision. In both cases, the action may come in spite of a clear sense that the outcome is very uncertain, at best, or even unlikely to succeed. An example is provided by the Japanese deliberations prior to their initiation of war with the United States in 1941. Recognizing that Japan could not eliminate the U.S. ability to retaliate and that the U.S. had by far the greater military capacity in the long run, the Japanese still decided
to take action because the alternative was to forsake their designs for dominance in Asia. The Japanese military based their assessment of the outcome on hope:

It is difficult to predict the termination of war, and it would be well-nigh impossible to expect the surrender of the United States. However, we cannot exclude the possibility that the war may end because of a great change in American public opinion . . . Meanwhile, we may hope that we will be able to influence the trend of affairs and bring the war to an end.

Referring to war initiation as a "last resort" suggests that it is based on a calculation that the consequences of military inaction are unacceptable. However miserable war involvement might be, it is perceived to be less miserable than accepting the consequences of inaction. Conceiving of war initiation motives thusly suggests that policy is not necessarily directed at achieving a particular political outcome but, rather, is more often motivated by "negative" objectives, i.e., outcomes that must be avoided whatever the risks and costs. From this perspective, war is not initiated as a result of a positive benefit-cost calculation; instead, the martial act results from rough calculations that the costs of failing to take action exceed the potential risks and costs of war. With this focus on the consequences of inaction, it is less surprising that policymakers have tended to devote little attention to the question of what purposes should direct the resort to war.

Realizing that decisionmakers are so motivated does not fully explain their apparent unwillingness or inability to define ultimate war aims. Perhaps decisionmakers, confronted by a complex policy problem, do not have the time, the information, or the incentive to conceive of the policy problem in its full complexity. These, and other, factors only compound the intellectual difficulty in comprehending complex problems.**

Especially in the case of war, there are monumental uncertainties and thorny value tradeoffs involved in the formulation of feasible and desirable policy outcomes; consequently, it may be more comfortable as well as more expeditious to avoid the difficult problems of defining goals. As those who theorize about bureaucratic politics have noted repeatedly, the environment of collective government decisionmaking makes agreement on value tradeoffs very difficult when the goals of competing interest groups must be taken into account; therefore, it is argued, it is often easier and more timely to agree that action must be taken than to agree on the ultimate purpose of that action.*

Further complicating factors that create incentives for not defining ultimate policy objectives include: quixotic domestic political pressures which, in particular, deny willingness to pursue limited objectives in the face of the potentially high costs of war; pressures from allies not to state prematurely objectives that might undermine their positions; and possible conflicts between the political and military leaderships over war aims that justify the expenditure of military values or that might limit significantly the use of available military means. In short, each of these pressures creates incentives for the political leadership to remain vague about their objectives as a means of keeping their options open in both the short and long terms while maintaining support for their policy of action.

**Operational Conduct of War**

The foregoing explanation of motives of war initiation and the failure to define war objectives is consistent with Fred Iklé's argument that policymakers, in weighing the choice between peace and war, rely on the estimates in the military's contingency plans in making their decision.** The choice, he argues, is based on the

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estimates of the costs and the probability of success associated with the military's proposed opening battle plan; but, because those war plans refer only to the opening act of war, policymakers are basing their decision on a plan without an ending. Iklé's formulation implies that, by choosing the military's plan for initiating war, the political leadership essentially relinquishes policy control to the military and, by default, elects the traditional pursuit of military victory. While containing an important insight about the role of military contingency plans, this simple view of the political leadership's abdication of the calculation of costs and benefits of war and of the control of plans and operations is contradicted by the post-World War II record of military conflicts.

Even when reviewing plans for war initiation, political leaderships have consistently acted authoritatively to modify the military's plans to conform with the leadership's desire for minimizing political and strategic risks and costs. In this manner, political leaderships tend to focus on avoidance of certain undesirable outcomes of action, rather than on the means of achieving particular outcomes that are desirable. Within these politically-defined constraints, political leaderships do tend, as Iklé argues, to accept the basic operational strategy proposed by military commanders and to accept at face value the military's estimates of the requirements for and the probability of success of the military's proposed operations.

For example, the initial period of American involvement in the Korean War was dominated by General MacArthur's formulations of strategy and military requirements, but Washington allowed him this freedom only within certain specified geographical, weapons and force size limitations. Nuclear weapons were precluded; attacks against Chinese territory were denied; and, in an equivocal set of instructions, the use of U.S. and U.N. troops across the 38th parallel was allowed only if involvement with Chinese or Soviet troops was not imminent. Unfortunately, because the ultimate political objective was not clearly defined--was it reunification of Korea or simply resecuring South Korea?--the ambiguity of Washington's restrictive authorizations to MacArthur allowed him to interpret his orders in a manner that led to the disastrous march
to the Yalu River.* He was left to set the objective; only he could
determine whether involvement in conflict with Chinese or Soviet
forces was imminent and unmanageable; and Washington accepted MacArthur's
estimates of the likely success of his efforts.

The British-French adventure to capture the Suez Canal in 1956
provides another example of ill-defined objectives which, when coupled
with peculiar, politically-imposed constraints on action, led to dis-
aster. In that event, it was never made clear whether the objective was
simply to retake the canal or, more ambitiously, to remove Nasser. To
complicate matters, the Eden government was unwilling to undertake an
undisguised invasion. Therefore, the military's invasion plans were
constantly being altered to meet changing political considerations and
to coordinate with the subterfuge of an Israeli attack on Egypt so as
to give the British an excuse to intervene.**

Similarly, U.S. military interventions in the 1960s were marked by
political limitations placed on the military's preferred plan of action.
The Bay of Pigs fiasco, for example, was the product of plans whose
numerous modifications came at the insistence of a President who denied
any direct U.S. involvement. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, the
military's plans for an air attack on the Russian missile sites followed
by an invasion were denied in favor of a carefully controlled naval
blockade. Again, in the case of Vietnam, President Kennedy authorized
significant increases in U.S. military involvement within the prohibition
against organized U.S. combat involvement. Later, when President Johnson
reached the decision for direct combat involvement, the military's plans
for a large-scale bombing campaign and for a rapid ground force buildup
were rejected in favor of more limited measures that corresponded to the
President's concerns about the domestic and international risks and
costs of such actions.***

See especially Chapters 2 and 6 for a good, brief description of the
relationship between MacArthur and Washington authorities.

description of British planning and decisionmaking during the Suez crisis.

*** *The Pentagon Papers, Senator Gravel Edition* (Boston: Beacon
Press, 1971), for a comprehensive statement of the various Presidents'
positions and considerations in taking the major decisions on Vietnam
policy.
Consistent with our propositions about war initiation decisions, in each of the cases cited above intervention was undertaken without benefit of a clearly defined political objective. Instead of basing that decision on a comparison of the potential costs of war to the benefits of desired war outcome conditions, the decision to go to war was based on an implicit calculation that the potential costs of inaction outweighed the uncertain, potential costs and risks of war. In fact, while policymakers were quite aware that serious risks and costs necessarily had to be accepted in going to war, there was little effort to calculate their possible magnitude. The uncertainties involved in calculating risks and costs of future actions apparently served to make policymakers less sensitive to those calculations as compared to the more immediate and evident domestic and international political risks and costs of failing to take action.

In developing and accepting the plans for military operations, the political leadership concerned itself with placing constraints on the scope, form and pace of military operations rather than with developing a strategy directed at a particular outcome or one having a high probability of success. The politically imposed constraints reflected a desire to avoid provocative or politically sensitive actions that might lead to escalation or to undesirable domestic or international political consequences. Thus, within those particular, broadly defined, frequently vague, and changing political constraints on operations, the military specialists were allowed to conduct their operations as they saw fit and as though military victory were the basic objective. In the absence of explicitly contradictory political objectives, they could hardly be expected to do otherwise.

Lacking specific objectives, policy control devolves through delegation and default to separate, specialized operational organizations, which more or less independently deal with their own aspects of the problem. Given the lack of an overriding and coordinating objective and of a uniform and well-articulated problem statement, no one should be too surprised when each organization "does its thing,"

*The term has been embroidered on by Robert Komer in his Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S. - SVN Performance in Vietnam (Santa Monica, Cal. The Rand Corporation, R-967-ARPA, August 1972).
in terms of its own interests and purposes. By not endorsing military victory, the political leadership retains freedom of action in an emerging political situation where termination eventually occurs short of total victory. Such political behavior is risky. It may not be able to compensate for military actions taken to secure total victory, actions which may shut off options, prevent favorable political objectives from developing, and reduce incentives for constraint, deescalation, and termination.

War Termination

The literature on war termination, such as it is, gives great emphasis to the problem of communicating, either by indirect "signalling" or by direct verbal communications, the willingness to terminate and the terms for negotiating an end to armed conflict. That literature focuses, particularly, on the problems of ambiguity, misperception, and distrust in the sending and receipt of either form of communication.* Clearly, each of those problems is related to difficulties in coordinating verbal communications with military actions; that is, are the "signals" derived from military actions consistent with the threats, assurances, and offers made in verbal communications? Insofar as the political leadership leaves the direction of military operations essentially in the hands of the military leadership and retains direction of diplomatic efforts, it is very likely that indirect "signals" will not be entirely consistent with direct, diplomatic communications. Furthermore, this coordination problem is exacerbated by the unwillingness or simple failure of political leaderships to engage in "peace planning" which relates military strategies with diplomatic-termination strategies.

In principle, "peace planning" should occur at the outset of war involvement and continue throughout the course of the war as a means of directing military operations to a desired outcome and to diplomatic efforts to gain that outcome. Typically this effort is avoided. For example, during World War II a major historical research effort was

undertaken in the United States to learn the lessons of the termination stage of World War I as a basis for peace planning. However, President Roosevelt refused to consider that material or to engage in any systematic appraisal of termination conditions and strategies until after the military victory had been won. * Because Roosevelt's stated objective was total military victory, this behavior might not be surprising. However, in a limited war context, a similar pattern of failing to coordinate war and peace planning is illustrated by the Korean War case, in which an initial decision to establish a stationary and stalemate battlefront preceded efforts to negotiate an end to the war. ** The war continued for two years in this condition when there was no change in military strategy to account for the refusal of the adversary to negotiate seriously. A final form of lack of coordination is illustrated by the Vietnam War case in which the continually escalating military effort was periodically interrupted by almost random and ad hoc "peace offensives." ***

What explains this failure to plan for peace and to coordinate those plans with military operations? One possible answer is that, as in Vietnam, the military tends to overstate the degree of progress or makes claims that with only a small amount of additional effort progress can be made. When coupled with official hopes that a war will be successful, these military estimates lead to the avoidance of "peace planning" until a more lucrative bargaining position is established. This avoidance is all the greater in circumstances where wishful thinking is absent and, instead, there is great pessimism about current progress. To develop scenarios for termination short of "success" is difficult for officials who made the initial decision to go to war. It is tantamount to accepting failure and, furthermore, threatens to raise, as Iklé points out, the threat of being labeled dishonorable or treasonous. ****

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** See Neustadt, op. cit.

*** This process is described in Theis, op. cit.

**** Iklé, op. cit.
Further constraints impede planning for peace. When the public discovers peace planning efforts before victory is won or is near at hand, there is a great possibility and risk of bitter protest over the costs of the war not being vindicated by triumph; alternatively, there may be strong public pressure to terminate immediately, given the indication that something less than victory is contemplated while the costs of war mount. It is always difficult to keep the military pursuing an aggressive strategy of operations if there are indications that military victory is not the goal or if the gains of combat may be bartered away after the war is ended. Finally, indications of peace planning short of victory raise problems of alliance politics in which fears of a separate peace lead to tensions between alliance partners. Consequently, there are strong incentives for policymakers to do nothing until battlefield events ultimately congeal the opinions of interested publics, allied governments, and operational organizations that terminating the conflict is preferable to continuation.

What this description of war and peace policymaking processes has attempted to show is that warfare has an internal dynamic serving many narrow purposes, purposes which may be seen as better served by continuing rather than terminating armed conflict--irrespective of the costs or of the potential gains from termination. What, then, motivates final termination? We argued initially that wars begin not on the basis of a comparison of the potential costs of war to the benefits associated with a desired outcome. Instead, a desired outcome is typically not defined, and, therefore, assessing the benefits of such an outcome is quite impossible. The dominant consideration in initiation decisions is the cost of not taking military action, the "negative benefits" of inaction. A similar cost calculation leads to a termination decision: War will persist until the perceived costs of continuing outweigh the costs of terminating.

This is the final twist on the theme of "negative objectives"; war persists, even if the military situation evolves to a point where a potentially desirable outcome is possible, until it occurs to one or both sides that continuing the action poses greater risks and costs than accepting the consequences of termination. The cost consequences
of termination usually have to do with political circumstances far
removed from the circumstances of the immediate military situation.
Governments who fail to achieve clearly advantageous outcomes relative
to the costs in blood and iron of the war are vulnerable to efforts to
replace them. Similarly for military institutions, the failure to
achieve dramatic victory often leads to diminished stature, and
diminished resources. As in the case of the Vietnam War, the inability
to achieve a clear-cut victory can lead to public disaffection with
an activist foreign policy and this, in addition to the demonstrated
inability to reach a satisfactory conclusion, can lead to international
perceptions of weakness or lack of resolve that undermine the nation's
worldwide power position. These consequences, while very uncertain,
may appear to far outweigh almost any level of costs for continuing
a stalemated or even a losing military effort.

It is this particular conception of "costs" that distinguishes
our view of the termination process from the views suggested by limited
war theorists. The latter tend to assume that termination decisions
are reached in a singular, cold, and rational-calculating manner that
compares the costs of continuing the conflict against benefits of
continuing. For example, William W. Kaufmann has argued that, in an
optimal limited war strategy

the enemy would have to be persuaded of a number of things.
He would have to be persuaded that he could not achieve his
objectives by the means currently employed. He would also
have to be convinced that he could not attain them by ex-
anding the war in scope or in weapons. At the same time,
he would have to have it demonstrated to him that the costs
of fighting to him outweighed the costs to the United States,
and consequently that the advantages of terminating the
conflict were greater than the advantages of continuing
it.*

What Kaufmann proposes appears to be an effort to do one of two
things: (1) create a stalemate in which one side realizes the costs
of the conflict are greater for it than for the other side, though
neither may be in a position for decisive action; or (2) one side is
able to "coerce" the other by imposing costly damage that outweighs
or threatens to outweigh any potential benefits that might accrue from
continuing the conflict.

* Kaufmann, op. cit., p. 113.
This formulation implies that the "costs" of conflict are those immediately associated with the loss of men, material, and money resulting from military operations and that the "benefits" of termination accrue from a savings of those potential costs in the future. While these costs and benefits are important, they may have little to do with one's ability to gain a favorable termination agreement.

The experiences of the Korean and Vietnam Wars illustrate the problems with this formulation. In each case the U.S. was able to construct what was essentially a stalemate situation in which the other side was unable to "win" militarily, but the wars dragged on for years at very high costs both in absolute and relative terms for the U.S. In the Vietnam case, after 1968 the U.S. modified its effort, through "Vietnamization," so as to reduce its economic and manpower costs for the "long haul." But even when the outcome of a North Vietnamese victory became a clear probability, the U.S. refused to seek a negotiated termination agreement. Why? Because the costs of seeking termination for the U.S. had less to do with the immediate situation in Vietnam than with the implications of termination short of "victory" for U.S. relations with its allies (the credibility of U.S. commitments would be undermined), for U.S. domestic politics (division created by a loss to communism and the possibility of a return to isolationism), and for the relations with global adversaries who might be inspired to adventurist policies by a show of irresolution by the U.S.

Given the persistent failure to define political outcome objectives and to determine military strategy on the basis of the least cost means for achieving those objectives, a number of fortuitous conditions have served to make possible the termination of conventional wars well short of the annihilation or exhaustion of one or both sides. Those conditions include: (1) time to reconsider or negotiate provided by the relatively slow pace of conventional conflict; (2) great power restraint; (3) a common strategic language; and (4) accepted doctrines of war limitation.

Though the potential pace of conventional warfare has increased in the last century, there remain limits on the speed by which national forces can be mobilized, deployed, and effectively engaged in action. Furthermore, even in the rather extreme cases of the succession of
Arab-Israeli conflicts, the time required to defeat or threaten defeat of enemy forces is measured at least in terms of a week. Though this pace places great strains on a decision process that wants to procrastinate in formulating, reaching agreement on, and imposing termination terms, so far the time involved has been sufficient. However, this happy outcome has been dependent upon great power restraint.

The disproportionate and global power of the U.S. and the Soviet Union and their mutual fear of escalation to nuclear war provided them with both the leverage to restrain third party conflicts and the incentive to restrain their clients and to limit their own involvement. The willingness and ability to impose restraints that both sides understand and can operate within confidently have depended critically on the creation and use of a common strategic language.

Since World War II, the great powers have developed certain "rules of the game" regarding mutually acceptable and expected behavior in crisis and conflict. In support of these "rules," the great powers have evolved a language for communication in peace time and in war that has been used to clarify national purposes and intentions as well as to communicate threats and assurances through a reliable and ever-open network. These "rules of the game" have been made credible by accepting a doctrine of limitation.

Though unlinked to a strategy of termination, there has emerged the expectation that war will be limited by political decision. In the post-World War II period, the American public and the foreign-military policy bureaucracy have come to accept generally the requirements of limited war, at least at the conventional level. The expectation and acceptance of limited conflict are based on the further expectation of political control. Though the political leadership may delegate considerable authority to field commanders, the military is expected to be responsive to politically-imposed constraints on action, and the leadership is expected to be able to monitor the battle situation and to communicate those constraints as the situation changes.
But Nuclear War is Different!

These conditions have compensated for our failure to develop pre-war doctrines or strategies including termination objectives and procedures. Unfortunately, none of these conditions holds for nuclear war and, in fact, strategic nuclear doctrine and force use planning effectively contravene creation of these conditions. Thus, the bitter experiences of conventional warfare are likely to be repeated on a grander scale should nuclear deterrence fail.

In the limited, conventional war context, there is adequate time to formulate and negotiate termination conditions before the military eliminates either side's capability to continue or wrecks unacceptable damage on the combatants' civilian populace. In the nuclear context, the time element is greatly diminished while the destructive potential increases drastically. Time is not measured in years or months, as was the case in Vietnam and Korea, but rather in minutes or seconds. Potential destructiveness is not measured in tens or hundreds of casualties sustained over lengthy periods of time, but rather in terms of thousands or millions of deaths inflicted in moments. What results from these fundamental changes in the rules is that the war is likely to end in ultimate destruction before anyone has time to consider why there was a war in the first place, let alone what would constitute grounds for its limitation.

In deterrence thinking and in expressions of expectations about a nuclear conflict, there is little indication that the great powers will be restrained. Both the U.S. and Soviet Union have emphasized unlimited, spasm strategic attacks in the event of nuclear war. While the post-war experience of low-level crises and conventional conflicts has produced a "tradition" of behavior and related expectations, no nuclear "rules of the game" exist by which the purposes and intentions of either side might be communicated by a combination of words and military actions.

U.S. strategists have made a few faltering and incomplete attempts to develop a doctrine of limited nuclear warfare. A dialogue with the Soviet Union to establish certain "rules" and a "language" for mutual understanding about strategic operations has begun. In response to the spasm, unlimited deterrent threat of massive retaliation, in the early 1960s the doctrine of counterforce-city avoidance was propounded. This
doctrine soon was abandoned as official policy in favor of assured destruction, which, reminiscent of massive retaliation, returned the focus to an all-out strike against Soviet cities as the basic deterrent threat. More recently, in reaction to unlimited war of mutual annihilation suggested by assured destruction, the notion of limited nuclear options has emerged.

As with the concepts of limited conventional warfare, both the counterforce-city avoidance and the limited nuclear options concepts have emphasized limiting the escalatory incentives and ultimate destruction of warfare rather than relating war initiation and conduct to a clear termination concept. This problem was, for the first time, at least officially recognized, if not systematically treated, in former-Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger's Annual Report for Fiscal Year 1975. He noted that previous strategic doctrines "neither contained a clear-cut vision of how a nuclear war might end, or what role the strategic forces would play in their termination." Then he went on to endorse the limited options concept on the claim of linkage to early termination: "To the extent that we have selective response options . . . we may be able to bring all but the largest nuclear conflicts to a rapid conclusion before cities are struck."**

Unfortunately, Schlesinger did not indicate how or why a limited nuclear war could or should come to a "rapid conclusion" any more than a limited conventional war. One must wonder whether military limited options planners have a strategy for bringing early termination, or, are they planning options which, failing early termination, lead rapidly to an all-out attack? Considering that the institutions responsible for this planning have traditionally prepared for all-out attacks and lacking a clear concept of war termination, the latter possibility seems more likely.

Concepts of limited nuclear war at least present incentives for restraints and for maintenance of national command authorities. But the mere presence of such incentives does not ensure political control.

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** Ibid, p. 38.
The structure of strategic forces, the predisposition of the command-control apparatus, and the character of the adversary attack may place serious constraints on effective political control.

There are few well-established and rehearsed procedural rules existing to guide adversaries should they wish to terminate an in-progress nuclear war. For instance, should someone initiate a pre-emptive attack, there are strong incentives for the first aggressive actions to be taken against communication systems: the launch of antisatellite missiles meant to blind and degrade one's ability to detect incoming missiles and bombers or the purposeful decapitation of primary command centers so as to parry an expected counter-thrust. However, a resort to perfidious scenarios is unnecessary to arrive at much the same uncomfortable situation with respect to command over the war-making machinery and control of the ultimate destruction inflicted on all parties.

Blinding, degradation, and the loss of control may occur simply as a result of a high altitude nuclear detonation; no one really knows with sufficient confidence what the worldwide communications implications of such an explosion would be. Should communications between the political leadership and military command posts be interrupted, responsibility for the conduct of a nuclear war transfers eventually by default to a number of dispersed military command centers. What are the consequences? The military personnel in charge, one can assume, are primarily motivated by what we have called war-conduct incentives; they are responsible primarily for carrying out large-scale, pre-planned strategic retaliatory attacks to achieve the greatest possible military destruction. Defining limited political objectives, constraining operations to conform to such objectives, and negotiating war termination short of all-out attacks is not part of their training or assigned responsibilities. Nor is it clear that the necessary coordination and control of operations would be possible in such a "headless" war.
DEVELOPING TERMINATION STRATEGIES: AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH

The preceding discussion describes and explains the nature of the termination problem and the deficiencies of policymakers and policy analysts in addressing that problem. In large part, those deficiencies have been the result of a lack of attention, let alone a lack of systematic analysis, given to the issue of war termination. If it serves no other purpose, we hope that this paper will inspire more detailed and systematic analyses of the termination problem, whether it arises from critical response to our arguments or from elaborations of the suggested analytic framework.

Next, we consider research issues which might be most profitably directed in a search for effective termination strategies.

There are at least four rather obvious research areas where more systematic understanding would be useful. The first involves developing a greater appreciation of the roles of war termination-related beliefs, values, and decisionmaking styles of individual policymakers and institutions likely to be involved in termination efforts—not only in potential adversary nations but also in the United States. The second involves systematic analyses of alternative negotiation strategies and tactics as to their risks, requirements, and probability of success in varying contingencies. Furthermore, because direct political control of military operations and secure communications channels to adversaries are central to effective termination strategies, a third important area for research involves the definition and development of command-control-communications system requirements. The final and most important area for further research relates to the development of military doctrines and strategies that, while aiming primarily at deterrence, also offer the possibility of ending war within the limits of reasonable objectives and at acceptable costs.

Credible work has been done attempting to discern typical belief structures and decisionmaking styles of various national units, but this work has not been directed to the issue of war termination.

*For example, there are the works of Nathan Leites including:
We need to know more about who, in the United States and in adversary nations, can influence termination decisions and what beliefs and values they hold that might affect their role in such decisions.* It should be pointed out that the intelligence community routinely makes such evaluations in an effort to determine adversary intentions in the context of deterrence and war-fighting decisions but, apparently, they seldom do so in the context of evaluating termination strategies.

A case in point involves the calculation of termination possibilities in the Vietnam War. In his memoirs, Maxwell Taylor, who was deeply involved in Vietnam policy decisionmaking, asserts that the expectations of probable North Vietnamese termination objectives and negotiation behavior were based on a simple assumption:

We were inclined to assume . . . they would seek an accommodation with us when the cost of pursuing a losing course became excessive. Instead, the North Vietnamese proved to be incredibly tough in accepting losses which, by Western calculation, greatly exceeded the value of the stakes involved.

Taylor goes on to say that, in terms of negotiation behavior, the assumption was that the North Vietnamese would act much like the North Koreans had acted during the Korean War.** These comments indicate that, in spite of the massive intelligence effort to determine North Vietnamese war-fighting capabilities and intentions, there was apparently little effort to determine the values, beliefs, and decisionmaking styles of the enemy. Instead, U.S. policymakers imposed "mirror image" assumptions on the North Vietnamese. That is, American beliefs and values were ascribed to the North Vietnamese in lieu of solid information to the contrary. Furthermore, U.S. policymakers were left to rely on analogy to a prior conflict with an Asian communist adversary in calculating probable negotiation style.

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*One of the key lessons Richard Neustadt presents in his *Alliance Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), is the importance of different perspectives on the same situation, of different expectations about likely and desirable outcomes, and of confused communications even among allies facing a difficult, not even a contentious, diplomatic problem.

Much can be learned from detailed study of the termination stage of past crises and wars. This research should be directed to answering these kinds of questions: Who made the critical decisions; what observable constraints affected those decisions; what procedures for decisionmaking and bargaining may have influenced the outcome; what adversary actions and communications had what effects on termination decisions; and what may have been the impact of pre-crisis or pre-war conceptions, or lack of thought, about termination strategies?

Much can be learned about the presumed "art" of war termination negotiations from an analysis of past crises and wars as well. Such analysis could be directed to answering the following kinds of questions:

- What has been the characteristic scope of bargains struck in successful termination negotiations? That is, are the issues usually narrowly defined and concerned with specific details, or are the issues and terms kept general and vague?

- How is the future generally perceived as it relates to the terms of negotiated termination? Is the intent to define a final and complete settlement or only a partial and short-term settlement that leaves the possibility of resumed hostilities open? How are expectations of compliance with the terms of a negotiated settlement influenced by the outcome of previous negotiations between the parties?

- How is the notion of "sincerity" operationalized? How is the willingness to negotiate in good faith signalled and reinforced while not undermining one's bargaining position? How does one signal the fact that initial negotiation terms may be preliminary and negotiable rather than final and non-negotiable?

- What can be said about the "chemistry" of successful and unsuccessful negotiations? What setting and format for the discussions, what kinds of individuals, and what relationship to central decisionmakers are conducive to effective negotiations in varying contexts?

- What kinds of negotiation strategies and tactics have been successful and unsuccessful and why?

Communication, command, and control taken together is a third area worthy of concerted investigation if one's overriding objective is to
terminate a war short of devastation.* Are there natural "stopping points" that might be established ahead of war's initiation that would not exist without serious forethought? If one wants to end a war with minimum damage, presuming that all efforts to prevent it in the first place have failed or that it has started accidentally, what can we say about the configuration of communication systems, weapon systems, or prearranged actions on the part of any or all concerned parties? If, for example, the maintenance of Washington, D.C. as a command center is judged to be critical to the retention of a termination-before-total-destruction capability, how might this information be made known to one's likely opponents in a nuclear war? That is to say, if American command and control of a strategic war transfers to some remote military commander by default, what happens to the chances that war can be terminated short of total devastation? How might the configurations of current and planned weapons systems be altered if one adopts a termination attitude? Instead of arguing over the merits of specific defensive weapons in the B-1 strategic bomber, could at least a small part of the discussion and attention be turned to equipping one of these aircraft as a weapon of negotiation instead of a weapon of destruction?** Ending a future war short of devastation may hinge on equipping at least one aircraft with appropriate communications equipment and pre-planning for end-of-war discussions. These options are not likely to occur unless a war termination perspective is explicitly adopted. A final example stresses the basic point. The disarmament of specific submarines or missiles may be a critical element in any terminal negotiations. How might procedures for voluntary disarmament be agreed upon in advance to avoid the less desirable contingency of having to say--and then act accordingly--"If you do not disarm and prove it to us, then we will do it for you?"

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*The extensive analyses done by the military services on the command-control problem have focused almost exclusively on gaining high confidence warning of attack, of ensuring timely response, and of collecting information on the status of military forces. Virtually nothing has been done on the question of what is necessary to stop military operations or to communicate with the adversary under the demanding conditions of nuclear war.

**This notion was suggested by Thomas Schelling in conversation.
There are extraordinary difficulties involved in terminating a war, and many of these—although far from all* are based on communications with, command over, and control of the war-making machinery. Imperative is contingency planning based on a microscopic scrutiny of the likely operations of the three deadly "Cs"—command-control-communications. Instead of meeting this requirement in the war termination context, the extremely large resource input to command-control capabilities has thus far been directed to insuring rapid response to an attack on the United States.

The fourth research area, that of making war-fighting strategies and doctrines consistent with war termination strategies, is the most demanding intellectually. The problems are suggested by current doctrine in the NATO area. There the purpose of current conventional capabilities is to provide an alternative to resort to nuclear weapons, at least for a short time, in order to allow termination negotiations. One is forced to ask, what is to be negotiated? There is little evidence that NATO leaders have agreed on how or what will be negotiated. If the Soviet Union has advanced into Western Europe, can we expect them to give up and quietly return home? What is NATO prepared to negotiate? If we have no clear idea, then why do we base NATO strategy on the ability to gain a negotiated settlement quickly or resort to nuclear weapons?

None of these are easy questions, but we will be no closer to the answers if we continue to ignore the termination problem. While research on these questions is not likely to produce high confidence and clearly supported policy conclusions, it is likely that the research product will lead us to a better understanding of the options we are forsaking by current defense policies and of the opportunities that alternative policies might present.

We hope so.

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*The many constraints on seeking termination have been described in detail by Iklé, op. cit.; and by Paul Kecskemeti, Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1958).