



U.S. Air Force 23rd Bomb Squadron B-52H Stratofortress, two German air force Panavia Tornados followed by two German Air Force Eurofighter Typhoons, and one Belgian air force F-16 Fighting Falcon, fly in formation over Germany during Bomber Task Force mission, August 24, 2022 (U.S. Air Force/Michael A. Richmond)

The Joint Force Remains Ill-Prepared to Consolidate Gains

By Thomas Theodore Putnam

The President can no longer just look for a good fighter to plot the operational scheme that leads to victory in arms. He must also find a person who can reconstruct a society.

—ANTHONY ZINNI¹

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A popular policy myth remains rooted in the U.S. mindset: that the military's mission in combat is complete when the coalition is militarily successful in large-scale

combat operations (LSCO) and that once the former regime's forces have left the battlefield, civilian agencies can immediately move in and begin leading the difficult task of stabilizing

the defeated nation. A study of history demonstrates the fallacy of this myth. Yet national policy and joint doctrine enable it to endure.

The time frame immediately following active armed conflict is particularly demanding and critical for the military. It embodies *consolidation of gains*, or taking advantage of the fleeting opportunity to translate operational successes into long-term strategic victory. To achieve consolidation of gains, the military needs to have a new operational emphasis and to pursue greater sustained interaction with civilian leaders, enabling the broader policy aims critical to strategic victory.

Militaries consolidate gains by undertaking activities to turn their temporary operational successes into lasting conditions that eventually allow legitimate civilian authorities to assume control under favorable circumstances.² Consolidation-of-gains activities focus predominantly on establishing security and providing minimum essential stability activities, such as immediate humanitarian assistance and restoration of key infrastructure.³ In its entirety, consolidating gains includes establishing territorial security, denying adversaries influence over the occupied population, setting a sound footing for future governance and economic viability for the nation, developing conditions for better relations between the conquered and the coalition governments, and setting the conditions for ongoing regional stability. The successful consolidation of gains is a whole-of-government mission because effective execution requires expertise residing outside the military.

In recent years, the importance of consolidating gains has grown in the joint force. The 2018 *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (JCIC) acknowledges the need to “follow through” after armed conflict and highlights the importance of interorganizational cooperation.⁴ Although this is a very positive development, updates to core joint publications (JPs) have not incorporated consolidation of gains.⁵

Until joint doctrine incorporates consolidation of gains, the joint force will remain ill-prepared to translate

fleeting military successes into long-term U.S. strategic victories. Preparing the joint force for consolidation of gains requires three changes. First, JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*, and JP 5-0, *Joint Planning*, must include detailed guidance covering specific consolidation-of-gains requirements and unified action-planning considerations. Second, the joint force must mandate unit preparation for the inherent complexities of consolidating gains. Third, the Department of Defense (DOD) must pursue a policy of operational control over U.S. Government participation during the consolidation of gains.

Nadia Schadlow’s 2017 *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory* delivers a powerful historical analysis on the efficacy of government efforts to translate combat successes into strategic political victories favorable to the United States.⁶ Her analysis spans from the Mexican-American War to contemporary efforts in the U.S. war on terrorism. Her analysis found the United States ill-prepared for consolidation of gains. It is still unprepared.

Analyzing joint doctrine against Schadlow’s model yields specific recommendations that offer low-cost implementation options for DOD policymakers to ensure better joint force readiness for consolidating gains. Although these recommendations will support any consolidation-of-gains scenario, for ease of discussion this article concentrates on postconflict termination.⁷

What Is Consolidation of Gains?

For proper discussion of consolidation of gains, a clear definition is necessary. Schadlow does not explicitly define the term in *War and the Art of Governance*. However, her definition can be inferred: military-led actions to control territory and establish the functioning local government institutions necessary to reconstitute a favorable political order.⁸ This idea closely matches the definition in Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*: “the activities to make enduring any temporary operational success and set the conditions for a stable environment allowing for a transition

of control to legitimate authorities.”⁹ Whereas Schadlow’s definition works for her intended audience—strategic-level leaders—it is too ambiguous for operational-level military leaders.

Unfortunately, consolidation of gains is essentially nonexistent in joint doctrine. The JCIC offers the only existing definition of “consolidation”: “continual and deliberate actions to secure gains and translate military success into the aims of policy.”¹⁰ Even with the JCIC’s contextual elaborations, this definition is too abstract to be useful. A deeper look into core joint publications, specifically JP 3-0 or JP 5-0, yields even less insight.¹¹

Army doctrine, on the other hand, is more useful. FM 3-0, *Operations*, dedicates an entire chapter to consolidation of gains and provides additional context to better understand the subject. It states, “Operations to consolidate gains require the *dynamic execution of area security and stability tasks* based on the desired operational end state that supports the strategic objective of the campaign” (emphasis added).¹² Although FM 3-0 provides the best definition, it fails to address consolidation’s purpose and requires pairing with the activities list. Furthermore, Army doctrine is myopic and does not consider interagency effort outside their support of military operations.

A better definition of “consolidation of gains” should incorporate the defining characteristics of its long-term purpose, which is: the establishment of security and the resumption of governance beneficial to the victor. I propose the following as a more appropriate definition for consolidation of gains:

Following armed conflict, the dynamic and simultaneous execution of the necessary offensive, defensive, and stability activities to secure an area and reestablish governance operations to set the conditions for sustainable strategic objectives, allowing for a transition of control to other legitimate authorities.

This definition reinforces the necessity of blending multiple activities and the need to directly contribute to strategic objectives from the outset of planning.

Furthermore, the definition is sufficient in situations where the military is supporting a unified action partner.

The Schadlow Consolidation-of-Gains Model

Schadlow concludes that the government's inability to prepare for consolidation of gains stems from an "American denial syndrome."¹³ This syndrome originates from the American desire for civilian leadership of anything related to governance and an avoidance of any colonialism stigma. The consequence is a consistent avoidance of institutionalizing and preparing the military for political activities associated with the restoration of governance following combat opera-

tions.¹⁴ These relevant activities generally encompass reestablishing territorial security, denying the adversary any influence, and generating a political order favorable to the United States and its allies.

Schadlow provides five recommendations to improve the efficacy of future consolidating gains, but, for the purposes of this paper, her fourth recommendation regarding the use of technological solutions to enable political objectives does not apply.

Although Schadlow's recommendations are intended for senior policymakers in the national security system, they are also applicable to the military. Pursuing these recommendations will generate a joint force capable

of securing political conditions favorable to the United States and its allies.

Recommendation 1: Policymakers Must Accept the Political Dimension Across the Spectrum of War. Schadlow reinforces the need to account for political requirements in the entire arc of warfare, from initial preparations to war termination. She believes all policymakers must "appreciate the complexity of politics" in war and recognize that governance requirements interlink with "conventional combat."¹⁵ To successfully translate military gains into strategic victory, the joint force must align all its activities with political requirements. This process starts with national policymakers establishing the strategic policy aims. Because of



Air Force Senior Airman Isabelle Friedt, munitions systems specialist assigned to 122nd Fighter Wing, Indiana Air National Guard, builds GBU-38 joint direct attack munitions during large-scale readiness exercise at Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center, Michigan, July 10, 2022 (U.S. Air National Guard/Kathleen LaCorte)



Warrant Officer Adaliz Pagan, with Puerto Rico Army National Guard Aviation, performs preflight inspection on UH-60 helicopter before departing to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, August 27, 2021, as part of humanitarian mission (U.S. Army National Guard/Agustin Montanez)

its inevitable involvement in securing political requirements, the military must pursue discussions that specifically resolve the issues of “what to demand politically, and how far to go militarily.”¹⁶

To ensure that suitable political outcomes are achieved, best military advice must encompass the entire arc of warfare and not concentrate only on combat operations.¹⁷ From the outset of any discussion of war, acknowledging that

“victory and conflict termination are two distinct and sometimes mutually antagonistic concepts” ensures that postconflict termination requirements are incorporated into the strategic risk calculation.¹⁸

A frank discussion of the realities of postconflict termination exposes the inherent complications of the interagency’s immediate assumption of responsibility for stabilization. Paralleling Schadlow’s findings, Hooker and Collins’s analysis

of operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, *Lessons Encountered*, found that a failure to adequately plan resulted in the prolonged involvement of the military and the inability to consolidate gains.¹⁹ Although it could be argued these populations never wanted liberal democracy, the ineffective synchronization during consolidation could never have set the conditions for sustainable, strategic outcomes favorable to the U.S. coalition.

Prior to conflict, the military and interagency must work with political leaders to identify all required conditions to fulfill strategic aims and understand how they nest with one another. This enables the whole-of-government alignment of ends, ways, and means to accurately assess risk before the leadership's focus is consumed by combat operations. Not only does this kind of discussion enable the creation of assessment criteria to accurately identify strategic victory conditions, but it also ensures that the government acknowledges all postconflict termination activities. Whereas advice provided to civilian policymakers might be ignored, the military is professionally obligated to plan on executing consolidation-of-gains activities to secure strategic victory.

Recommendations 2 and 3:
Normalize Unity of Command with Army Operational Control of Agencies in War. Schadlow's analysis discusses the flawed yet persistent belief among policymakers that consolidation of gains is not an integral part of war. A "divide and fail" model results in separate commands competing over the conduct of governance.²⁰ At best this results in delayed consolidation of gains. While the decisions and final shape of the units conducting military governance in the aftermath of World War II yielded "liberally oriented political and economic systems" in Italy, Korea, Japan, and Germany, delays and costs were incurred.²¹ At worst, competition for control on consolidation results in a protracted experience, such as Operation *Iraqi Freedom* (OIF). Schadlow's "divide and fail" model is reinforced by Hooker and Collins's findings that an "inability to integrate, direct, prioritize, and apply capabilities in the optimal manner diminished success as much as any faulty strategy or campaign plan."²²

War and the Art of Governance exposes a persistent U.S. belief wherein the military leads LSCO when combat operations are the focus, and civilians lead stabilization when governance and rebuilding are the focus. This belief infers a clean break in leadership responsibility at conflict termination, a perception reinforced by Department of Defense Directive (DODD) 3000.05,

Stabilization, which unequivocally cedes any claim for leadership responsibility of the stabilization phase to the Department of State.²³ Although DOD's explicit support of a lead Federal agency is noble, regrettably this support obscures the necessity to blend security and stability activities across the transition between LSCO and stabilization in both time and space.

This obscuration predisposes the military to be insensitive to postconflict termination requirements and to toss the proverbial hot potato to an interagency unable to assume responsibility.²⁴ Ambiguity in stabilization's leadership responsibility is amplified amid ongoing combat operations and may result in leaders losing sight of the necessity to blend security and stability activities to consolidate gains.

Furthermore, a clean-break perception muddles the inherent complexity in the military-to-civilian transitions of responsibility in a postconflict termination environment. "Transitions, seams, and boundaries introduce inherent risk into an operation" that become further amplified when integrating elements outside a unified command structure.²⁵ Conrad Crane and W. Andrew Terrill's prescient warnings on postconflict termination preparations included the inevitability of transitions in an environment fraught with political and security uncertainty.²⁶ The analysis of OIF indicates the United States did not effectively create unified action to enable these transitions.

While joint doctrine stresses a desire for unified action, unity of effort is extremely difficult to accomplish within the current U.S. interagency framework. JP 3-08, *Interorganizational Cooperation*, is replete with warnings about the difficulties and significant challenges in synchronization stemming from policy differences. Even when specific goals are agreed upon, the joint force commander must recognize an actual plan is necessary because these goals may be interpreted differently.²⁷ This doctrinal forewarning is confirmed in Hooker and Collins's analysis that found the United States was ineffective in inter-organizational synchronization during OIF.²⁸

Recommendation 5: The U.S. Government, Especially the Military, Must Have Some Standing Capabilities and Organizations Prepared to Conduct Key Governance Tasks. The U.S. military's inevitable participation in consolidation of gains has not changed since World War II. As noted in FM 3-0, the Army has been involved in consolidating gains of every conflict since the Indian Wars of the late 1800s, whether it predicted participation beforehand or not.²⁹ As part of a Goldwater-Nichols military, the Army's experiences apply to the joint force. Yet outside the passing mention in the JCIC, planning for this inevitable participation is nowhere to be found in core joint doctrine.

In the successful consolidation-of-gains experiences of World War II, the Army did not vie for its leadership position.³⁰ The Army became the lead agency because it was the only coherent institution with the structure, sustainment capability, and personnel capable of implementing consolidation over large geographic areas.³¹ Reinforcing this perspective is the decision of John McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany in 1949, who, when first approached in 1945 to lead consolidation of gains, rejected the position because he felt the military was in the best position.³² McCloy's sentiments echo those made by Secretary of State James Byrnes toward the beginning of World War II.³³ It is important to note that to be effective, the military was heavily reliant on outside expertise provided by civilians.

Reinforcing the joint force's need to embrace a leadership role during consolidation is the interagency's inability to satisfy expectations of leadership during consolidation of gains. A RAND study found the United States struggled in generating the necessary civilian workforce during OIF. Not only did this study note the difficulty in recruiting experienced personnel within the DOD, State Department, and U.S. Agency for International Development, but it revealed that the joint force filled these positions.³⁴ The complications inherent in deploying civilians to an active combat

zone highlight the need for military capabilities to fill these requirements.

Schadlow challenges the Army to recognize its past “efforts to escape” consolidation responsibilities, which failed and “only served to make those tasks more difficult.”³⁵ The former commanding general of the U.S. Army’s Combined Arms Center, Lieutenant General Mike Lundy, reinforces this sentiment in “Three Perspectives on Consolidating Gains.” The inescapable requirement to execute military governance, combined with the interagency’s inability to meet desired participation levels, means the military must embrace a mission it will be assigned by default.³⁶

The requirement to prepare for consolidation of gains is not solely an Army responsibility. Joint task force (JTF) staff must possess a deep understanding of consolidating gains requirements because JTFs integrate all component plans and resource the land component’s inevitable consolidation mission.

Recommendations to Improve the Joint Force

JP 3-0 and JP 5-0 Must Include Detailed Guidance Covering Specific Consolidation-of-Gains Requirements and Unified Action Planning

Considerations. As Clausewitz states throughout *On War*, politics and military operations are inseparable.³⁷ Regrettably, joint doctrine and policy largely ignore consolidation of gains, increasing the risk of failing to achieve strategic victory. If joint doctrine continues to ignore consolidation of gains, achievement of policy aims will remain in jeopardy. Incorporation into doctrine will better position the United States for effective consolidation of gains.

The JCIC states that “the Joint Force must view military operations and the follow-through to secure policy aims as an integrated whole.”³⁸ It also recognizes a crucial reality—that the translation of military success into sustainable outcomes remains “one of the most difficult elements of campaigning.”³⁹ Enabling successful follow-through implies the need for a close, continuing relationship with interagency partners to ensure military

operations establish viable conditions for interagency authorities to assume leadership responsibility. Furthermore, the JCIC reinforces that governance tasks are directly connected to conventional warfare.

These critical aspects of warfare are absent from joint doctrine. Core joint doctrine does not contain definitive guidance on expected activities to guide practitioners. Nor do these publications contain substantive guidance on navigating the necessary interagency-military relationship to achieve unified action.

Without clearly articulating the consolidation of gains as a vital transition in doctrine, the joint force will remain ill-prepared to provide policymakers the best military advice on the most efficient means for securing strategic aims. While the current strategic military leaders with operational experience in Afghanistan and Iraq still have opportunities to pass on essential knowledge, capturing this understanding in joint doctrine can ensure these hard-fought lessons are not simply lessons encountered.

Incorporating two specific areas from recent operational experience will generate a significant return on investment that will greatly benefit future generations. First, identify how operational-level military objectives are established. Second, include a realistic point of departure for expected military activities during consolidation of gains.

Clearly, operational-level military objectives are set within military channels. But a deeper examination of doctrine reveals two fundamental yet unaddressed questions about establishing military objectives. First, what factors influence the substance of military objectives to ensure military successes effectively contribute to strategic victory? Second, how much interagency participation is necessary to effectively link military successes to the eventual transition to civilian authorities?

In the arc of military operations, the military eventually transfers responsibility to a civilian authority, whether to the U.S. interagency or directly to a host nation element. Until operational environment conditions, which are dependent on and unique to each conflict, are met, this civilian authority is incapable

of leadership. Current joint planning considerations ignore civilian authority requirements that would enable transition of responsibility.

Military objectives must positively contribute to the achievement of strategic aims. However, joint doctrine currently enables divergence to occur because no mandate exists for the joint force to nest military objectives directly into the interagency’s starting point requirements. Specifying the necessity to align military objectives with interagency postconflict termination starting points would ensure that the arc of military operations leads directly to the desired political outcomes.

Worse yet, joint publications lead practitioners to believe that only the military’s concerns matter. Joint doctrine is replete with examples of how the interagency supports the joint force, with no discussion of how their goals and objectives are synchronized. Interagency interactions in JP 3-0 concentrate on the truism of unified action, providing guidance to conduct “synchronization, coordination, and integration” with the interagency.⁴⁰ In JP 5-0, interagency discussions concentrate exclusively on deriving requirements to support the joint force, simply keeping the interagency informed about military operations, and attempting to obtain information about interagency activity.⁴¹ Furthermore, doctrine fails to discuss transitions of responsibility to legitimate civilian authority to enable military redeployment.⁴²

Practitioners may believe JP 3-08 could be a useful source for interagency-military synchronization. Regrettably, its guidance mirrors that of JP 5-0. The only significant instance on synchronizing objectives is found in the section on theater campaign plans. This guidance emphasizes obtaining interagency participation at the earliest phases to identify decision points that enable DOD to transition to a supporting role.⁴³ Unfortunately, most contingency planners will likely overlook this section.

Understanding interagency starting point requirements reinforces the need to maintain an active dialogue to ensure alignment of military objectives. The conceptualized war outcomes are unlikely to



Marine attached to 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, scans for targets for Fire Support Coordination exercise prior to exercise Cold Response 22, in Setermoen, Norway, March 7, 2022 (U.S. Marine Corps/William Chockey)

exist at conflict termination due to war's elements of uncertainty and chance.⁴⁴ Maintaining focus on interagency-military transitions in doctrine reminds planners to account for the inevitable transitions of responsibility.

Interagency-military tensions are likely to arise because unity of command is not inherent in the government's culture.⁴⁵ JP 3-08 recommends producing a shared interagency-military plan.⁴⁶ However, although JP 3-08 provides a descriptive list of helpful "hallmarks" of harmonious interagency coordination, it fails to address ways to overcome interagency impasses in either planning or execution.⁴⁷ Doctrine must capture proven methods to overcome disagreements from recent government experiences. Providing

established frameworks or recommendations in core doctrine allows future planners to capitalize on hard-learned lessons of recent experiences.

A viable post-consolidation-of-gains hand-off requires interagency-military integration early in the planning process. Although core joint publications contain some instances of guidance to begin planning postconflict activities and set conditions for stability activities well before the outset of armed conflict, advice on ways to do so is significantly lacking.⁴⁸ Integrating specific requirements to begin collaborative planning prior to conflict increases the likelihood of strategic victory.

Joint doctrine stresses the requirement to secure a stable postconflict termination environment to enable

redeployment. The Army's consolidation-of-gains doctrine may be useful to a joint staff, but it is tightly focused on security activity to prevent resurgence of the enemy.⁴⁹ As Schadow notes, the military also needs better guidance on military governance to set conditions for strategic victory. Explaining what specific activities need to be addressed and how to achieve integration with the interagency will improve efforts to consolidate gains.

The achievement of desired political objectives does not automatically result from successful execution of "dominating activities."⁵⁰ Regrettably, joint doctrine provides only generalized guidance on stability activities, and this information is not placed in the context of consolidation



Marine Captain Austin Branch, left, and Navy Lieutenant Dillon Duke, both assigned to Marine Corps Fifth Air Naval Gun Liaison Company, conduct Naval Surface Fire Support communication drills with Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force in Combat Information Center aboard USS *Dewey* while participating in bilateral advanced warfare training, Pacific Ocean, March 1, 2022 (U.S. Navy/Benjamin Lewis)

of gains. JP 5-0's December 2020 update was extremely disappointing; it did not codify the JCIC into doctrine and thus delayed the joint force's comprehension and embrace of consolidating gains concepts.

Acknowledging postconflict termination activities that enable "war-winning" will facilitate an understanding of the requirement to plan and support more than security activities.⁵¹ Incorporating this information provides a frame of reference to understand operational requirements. Furthermore, it codifies standard requirements to expedite the next generation's understanding of consolidating gains.

If capturing the experiences of current strategic leaders with operational experience in Afghanistan and Iraq cannot be done in a timely manner, available options come from the works of military scholars. These include historical analysis, such as Nadia Schadlow, Charles Barry, and Richard Lacquement's "A Return to the Army's Roots," which provides a strong starting point for inclusion in core joint doctrine.⁵² Another option is to derive validated principles from scholarly hypotheses. Conrad Crane and W. Andrew Terrill's *Reconstructing Iraq* is one of several options available for doctrine writers.⁵³

The Joint Force Must Mandate Unit Preparation for the Inherent Complexities of Consolidating Gains.

Although the United States desires civilian leadership of stabilization to begin immediately following conflict termination, previous conflicts demonstrate that the joint force will be required to execute governance for consolidation to be successful. Both Schadlow and Lundy concur, stating that the military always finds itself governing out of necessity both during and after conflicts.⁵⁴ To ensure military preparedness, Lundy insists consolidation of gains "deserves the same,

or perhaps greater, level of professional forethought than combat operations.”⁵⁵ This forethought requires intellectual preparation for the requirements and complexities of consolidating gains.

As DOD prioritizes joint all-domain operations (JADO) readiness, introducing consolidation-of-gains requirements places tension on its most precious resource: time. However, ignoring consolidation of gains places hard-fought JADO-based military successes at risk of becoming meaningless when the winning coalition struggles to secure strategic victory. To reduce such risk, the joint force must ensure officers are trained to consolidate gains. Understanding why the operation’s context changes following conflict termination, and interagency-military integration, is critical to strategic success.

Preparing for the power vacuum following successful combat operations requires embracing and understanding consolidation-of-gains requirements. Two simple, cost-effective avenues already exist for advancing unit preparation: first, incorporating a more definitive exploration of postconflict termination during professional military education (PME), and second, implementing mandatory execution of consolidating gains during joint training exercises.

PME will be indispensable for educating leaders on the intellectual framework necessary to surmount the complexities surrounding consolidation of gains.⁵⁶ The most difficult skillset requiring military proficiency will be conditions-setting activities: planning, synchronizing, and resourcing. PME provides the ideal setting to standardize “the thoughtful reflection and study of how we consolidate gains on the battlefield.”⁵⁷ Promulgation through PME will provide JTF staff with a deep bench capable of enabling the successful follow-through to generate strategic victories.

A focus on “war-winning” activities in PME will better prepare the joint force to instinctively align “warfighting” activities to achieve strategic objectives.⁵⁸ While PME includes some instruction on how stability operations support strategic objectives, the preponderance

of PME material focuses on warfighting. Explanations of how to set postconflict termination objectives that achieve national security objectives, and how the military operates in a whole-of-government environment, are insufficiently covered. This shortfall is reinforced by joint doctrine’s lack of detail on war-winning considerations. Creating time for war-winning-focused education is possible by compressing instruction on planning processes that most students already understand, while still maintaining Goldwater-Nichols Act requirements.

Training exercises offer the best venue to maintain competency in the difficult task of translating military success into strategic victory. As the U.S. experience in Iraq and Afghanistan evinces, consolidating gains is far more difficult and complex than executing LSCO. The requirements to effectively, and successfully, operate within a large staff cannot be replicated in PME. Not only do training exercises oblige the staff to understand the internal processes, but the interagency liaisons within the headquarters also provide realistic and invaluable insight into execution.⁵⁹ Additionally, these exercises expose higher headquarters staff members evaluating the exercise to the requirements of war-winning.

DOD Should Pursue a Policy of Operational Control Over Government Participation During the Consolidation of Gains. The U.S. Government relies on consensus-building to achieve unity of effort. In Iraq and Afghanistan, the lack of strategic-level oversight and of in-theater coordinating authority resulted in the United States’s being “often unable to knit its vast interagency capabilities together for best effect” to achieve consolidation.⁶⁰ President Joseph Biden’s National Security Council framework has not drastically changed the U.S. national security architecture. Until stovepiping and differing cultures can be altered, unity of effort will remain elusive.⁶¹

The joint force’s receipt of operational control of government participation during consolidation of gains will enable success. Accepting military leadership does not entail accepting military leadership without civilian oversight or

assistance; this is anathema to U.S. values. Schadlow’s analysis demonstrates that military leadership is not impossible. During World War II, military governance, not State Department–led governance, consolidated gains in Italy, Germany, Korea, and Japan.⁶² Military officers synchronized security and governance activities within a joint force–type structure.⁶³ The military lacks all the required expertise to successfully consolidate gains independently. Interagency participation and support from unified action partners is sine qua non to successful consolidation. By preparing for military leadership of consolidation, the national security system acknowledges the pragmatic reality of a postconflict environment: the interagency framework is not constructed to execute consolidation of gains.

Without a U.S. Government culture change, interagency partners will remain unlikely to accept the military as lead Federal agency during the tenuous transition to stabilization. To prevent future unity-of-effort issues, DOD should seek approval for operational-level unity of command of all government consolidation participation. Schadlow’s analysis demonstrates that the military is capable of leading military governance and other activities to consolidate gains. This policy change will not be easy to accomplish. Unless a catastrophic event or congressional action demands reform, this policy change will take several years, if not decades, because of the different stakeholders and the national security structure’s engrained culture. But the cost of blood and treasure spent in misplaced efforts makes it worthwhile to start changing now.

As a start point for this change, while DODD 3000.05 remains policy, the military should nest completion of consolidating gains as the endstate of the dominate phase. Because the military leads LSCO, nesting in this manner directly links military objectives to interagency starting-point requirements and alleviates any confusion about ownership of consolidation activities.

Some would argue there is no need to highlight consolidation of gains in JP 3-0 or JP 5-0. They would direct practitioners

to JP 3-31, *Joint Land Operations*, which does cover some important consolidation-of-gains considerations. JP 3-31 states that the goal of major operations and campaigns is to prevail and consolidate gains quickly to “establish conditions favorable to the population and the U.S. and its international partners.”⁶⁴ To do so, the joint force must begin postconflict termination planning at the initiation of joint planning and continually update its plans.⁶⁵ In the dominate phase, JP 3-31 warns, an “isolated focus on offense and defensive operations” risks overlooking the “need to establish or restore security and provide humanitarian relief.”⁶⁶ Acknowledging that other agencies may not be immediately available following LSCO, JP 3-31 informs military planners to be prepared to lead stability efforts.⁶⁷ Finally, JP 3-31 states that effective stabilization requires integration of non-military plans and efforts.⁶⁸

At face value, this appears to be great advice. However, relying upon JP 3-31 risks relearning lessons encountered in previous efforts of consolidating gains. Although JP 3-31 contains great truisms, it is unhelpful to planners without significant experience or training in consolidating gains. Possessing only generalities, it does not explain how to anticipate, resource, or support joint force land component command requirements. The JTF must understand consolidating gains to effectively translate strategic requirements into operational objectives. Relying on JP 3-31 leaves the JTF with an inadequate understanding of how to incorporate consolidation-of-gains requirements into a coherent overarching plan that synchronizes all JTF component activities.

Conclusion

William Flavin, a peacekeeping expert, reminds practitioners that “conflict termination is the formal end of fighting, not the end of conflict.”⁶⁹ And, as FM 3-0 notes, “Consolidation of gains is integral to winning armed conflict and achieving enduring success” because it directly bridges combat success to strategic victory.⁷⁰ If consolidation is done well, friendly forces will retain

the initiative. Stabilization will run smoothly because the adversary’s means and will to resist are no longer present. If consolidation of gains is not properly considered, or is executed without operational environment considerations, the conflict will likely persist and require the military to provide further assistance to enable stabilization.

DOD can enact internal improvements now to better prepare for consolidation of gains. Incorporating consolidation of gains into joint doctrine is the first step. The next step is training the joint force to plan, build, and implement consolidation of gains in a unified action environment. At the same time as these internal improvements are being implemented, DOD should pursue policy and cultural changes within the national security structure to acquire the unity of command necessary to effectively consolidate gains.

In his influential *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace*, Donald Kagan cautions leaders to place the same amount of planning effort and resources into the preservation of peace as they do for armed combat.⁷¹ In providing equal effort, countries will avoid the persistent errors of the past. Consolidation of gains sets the conditions for achieving policy goals and building a lasting peace. If the joint force does not emphasize its inherent role during this critical transition, it will remain ill-prepared to effectively achieve strategic objectives and will unnecessarily prolong armed conflict. JFQ

Notes

¹ Tony Zinni and Tony Koltz, *Before the First Shots Are Fired: How America Can Win or Lose Off the Battlefield* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 172.

² Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, October 6, 2017, Incorporating Change 1, December 6, 2017), 8-1, available at <https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN6687_FM%203-0%20C1%20Inc%20FINAL%20WEB.pdf>.

³ As a term referring to the translation of military successes into lasting conditions, *consolidation of gains* is interchangeable with *gains consolidation* or *consolidate gains*. These

should not be confused with the tactical task of *consolidation* used for “organizing and strengthening a newly captured position so that it can be used against the enemy.” See FM 3-90-1, *Offense and Defense*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, March 2013).

⁴ The 2018 *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* emphasizes the requirement to secure gains, referred to with the term *follow-through*. Follow-through is achieved by the military synchronizing with other elements of national power as armed conflict ends to enable consolidation of gains and a return to competition. See *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, March 16, 2018), available at <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concept_integrated_campaign.pdf?ver=2018-03-28-102833-257>.

⁵ Core joint publications (JPs) include JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, March 25, 2013, Incorporating Change 1 from July 2017); JP 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, January 17, 2017, Incorporating Change 1 from October 22, 2018); and JP 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, December 1, 2020).

⁶ Dr. Nadia Schadlow is an American academic with service in multiple high-level, defense-related government positions. Most significantly, she served as the Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategy in the Donald Trump administration, in which position she was the primary author of the 2017 National Security Strategy. She is a full member of the Council on Foreign Relations with articles in several well-respected national security-related publications.

⁷ A term for the cessation of active armed combat is not specifically defined in doctrine. William Flavin notes, “Conflict termination is the formal end of fighting [in large-scale combat operations (LSCO)], not the end of conflict.” Conflict termination should not be confused with *termination criteria* from JP 3-0. Termination criteria are specific standards that enable the military’s redeployment. For a definitive exploration of conflict termination, see William Flavin, “Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success,” *Parameters* 33, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), 96, available at <<https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol33/iss3/9/>>. Additionally, although Army doctrine recognizes consolidation of gains in situations other than LSCO, the preponderance of literature covers the postconflict termination period following LSCO. Army doctrine recognizes that consolidation of gains might begin in the consolidation area—the area passed by the Army as it continues fighting to achieve military objectives. Consolidation of gains can also occur in other operations such

as peacekeeping or peace enforcement. For specific insight, see chapter 8, “Operations to Consolidate Gains,” in FM 3-0.

⁸This definition is derived primarily from the opening lines of *War and the Art of Governance*: “Success in war ultimately depends on the consolidation of political order, which requires control over territory and the hard work of building local governmental institutions.” See Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 1.

⁹FM 3-0, 8-1.

¹⁰*Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, 33.

¹¹The closest approximation to consolidating gains within joint doctrine is “stability activities.” Although these are activities inherent to consolidating gains, their use in doctrine is wholly under the umbrella of activities in the dominate or stabilize phases; they do not incorporate the functions required for them to be considered consolidation of gains.

¹²Note the intentional use of “dynamic” to reinforce the interplay between security and stability tasks. See FM 3-0, 8-2.

¹³For additional insight into the factors and themes generating the “American denial syndrome,” see chapter 1, “American Denial Syndrome: Failing to Learn From the Past,” in Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 22.

¹⁴Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 14.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁶Bradford A. Lee, “Winning the War but Losing the Peace? The United States and the Strategic Issues of War Termination,” in *Strategic Logic and Political Rationality: Essays in Honor of Michael L. Handel*, eds. Bradford A. Lee and Karl F. Walling (London: Routledge, 2003), 250.

¹⁷Fred Charles Iklé is one of several authors who forewarn practitioners of the likely hyper focus on combat operations once hostilities begin. See chapter 1, “The Purpose of Fighting,” in Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 2.

¹⁸J. Boone Bartholomees, “Theory of Victory,” *Parameters* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2008), 29, available at <<https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol38/iss2/7/>>.

¹⁹Richard D. Hooker, Jr., and Joseph J. Collins, *Lessons Encountered: Learning from the Long War* (Washington, DC: NDU Press, September 2015), 406, available at <<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Publications/Books/Lessons-Encountered/>>.

²⁰Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 274.

²¹See chapter 3, “World War II: Building an Organization,” in Schadlow, *War and the*

Art of Governance, for an in-depth analysis on the evolutions of the U.S. governance structures during World War II.

²²Hooker and Collins, *Lessons Encountered*, 10.

²³The directive clearly states, “The Department of State is the overall lead federal agency for U.S. stabilization efforts; the U.S. Agency for International Development is the lead implementing agency for non-security U.S. stabilization assistance; and DOD [Department of Defense] is a supporting element, including providing requisite security and reinforcing civilian efforts.” See DOD Directive 3000.05, *Stabilization* (Washington, DC: DOD, December 13, 2018), available at <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/d3000_05.pdf>.

²⁴Hooker and Collins’s overarching conclusion that “the military was insensitive to needs of the post-conflict environment” agrees with Schadlow’s findings that the military should maintain responsibility for all government contributions during consolidation of gains. For more, see Hooker and Collins, *Lessons Encountered*, 13.

²⁵A timeless teaching point continually reinforced by Colonel Patrick Scott O’Neal, former commander, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 3rd Infantry Division, U.S. Army.

²⁶Conrad C. Crane and W. Andrew Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2003), 46.

²⁷JP 3-08, *Interorganizational Cooperation* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, October 12, 2016, Validated October 18, 2017), I-15, available at <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_08.pdf?ver=CqudGqyJFga9GaACVxgaDQ%3d%3d>.

²⁸Hooker and Collins, *Lessons Encountered*, 10.

²⁹FM 3-0, 8-3.

³⁰Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 146.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*, 122.

³³*Ibid.*, 100.

³⁴See Molly Dunigan et al., *Expeditionary Civilians: Creating a Viable Practice of Department of Defense Civilian Deployment* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2016), 2, 4, 111, available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR975.html>.

³⁵Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 278.

³⁶Mike Lundy et al., “Three Perspectives on Consolidating Gains,” *Military Review* (August 2019), 12, available at <<https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Army-Press-Online-Journal/documents/2019/Lundy-OLE.pdf>>.

³⁷In one specific instance: “The

political object is the goal, war is the means of achieving it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose.” See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

³⁸*Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, 23.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 24.

⁴⁰JP 3-0, I-8.

⁴¹See JP 5-0, the paragraph on “Interagency Considerations” in section I-25 and chapter 3, “Joint Planning Process.”

⁴²JP 5-0, III-22.

⁴³JP 3-08, II-5.

⁴⁴Clausewitz, *On War*, 104.

⁴⁵JP 3-08, I-16.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, I-15.

⁴⁷The list is titled “Hallmarks of successful whole-of-government planning and operations.” See 3-08, II-3.

⁴⁸The JP 3-0 guidance on stability activities as part of LSCO is one of the few places that explicitly mentions collaborative planning to synchronize civilian-military efforts, but how to do this planning is not provided. JP 5-0 only implies a need to integrate interagency early, predominantly in the context of theater campaign plans. See JP 3-0, VIII-6, or JP 5-0.

⁴⁹Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations*, states: “Army forces consolidate gains through decisive action, executing offense, defense, and stability to defeat enemy forces in detail and set security conditions required for a desired end state” (emphasis added). And although chapter 8 of FM 3-0, “Operations to Consolidate Gains,” mentions stability activities, the emphasis for military support is on security-related tasks. See ADP 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2019), available at <https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN18010-ADP_3-0-000-WEB-2.pdf>; ADP 3-05, *Army Special Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2019), available at <[https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN18909_ADAP%203-05%20C1%20FINAL%20WEB\(2\).pdf](https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/ARN18909_ADAP%203-05%20C1%20FINAL%20WEB(2).pdf)>; and chapter 8, “Operations to Consolidate Gains,” in FM 3-0.

⁵⁰ADP 3-05; *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning*, 2.

⁵¹Nadia Schadlow, Charles Barry, and Richard Lacquement, “A Return to the Army’s Roots: Governance, Stabilization, and Reconstruction,” in *The Future of the Army Profession*, 2nd ed., ed. Don M. Snider and Gayle L. Watkins (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 254.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 258.

⁵³Crane and Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq*.

⁵⁴Lundy et al., “Three Perspectives on Consolidating Gains,” 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁶ Not all joint headquarters staff officers are formally trained at a resident professional military education institution. However, the updates in doctrine will facilitate operational training and self-development.

⁵⁷ Lundy et al., “Three Perspectives on Consolidating Gains,” 13.

⁵⁸ Schadlow et al., “A Return to the Army’s Roots,” 254.

⁵⁹ Joint headquarters, such as geographic combatant commands, are the most likely to have information assurance (IA) personnel, working in either a directorate or in a joint interagency coordination group. Joint interagency task forces will have various IA personnel, depending on their mission.

⁶⁰ Hooker and Collins, *Lessons Encountered*, 10.

⁶¹ JP 3-08, I-4.

⁶² For additional details, see chapter 3, “World War II: Building an Organization,” in Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*.

⁶³ It is fair to note that the varying degrees of effectiveness were due to geographic and resourcing issues.

⁶⁴ JP 3-31, *Joint Land Operations* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, October 3, 2019, Incorporating Change 1, November 16, 2021), IV-2, available at <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_31ch1.pdf?ver=SR6LgtBJ_JhcWK2MyJ-FWA%3D%3D>.

⁶⁵ JP 3-31, V-1.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

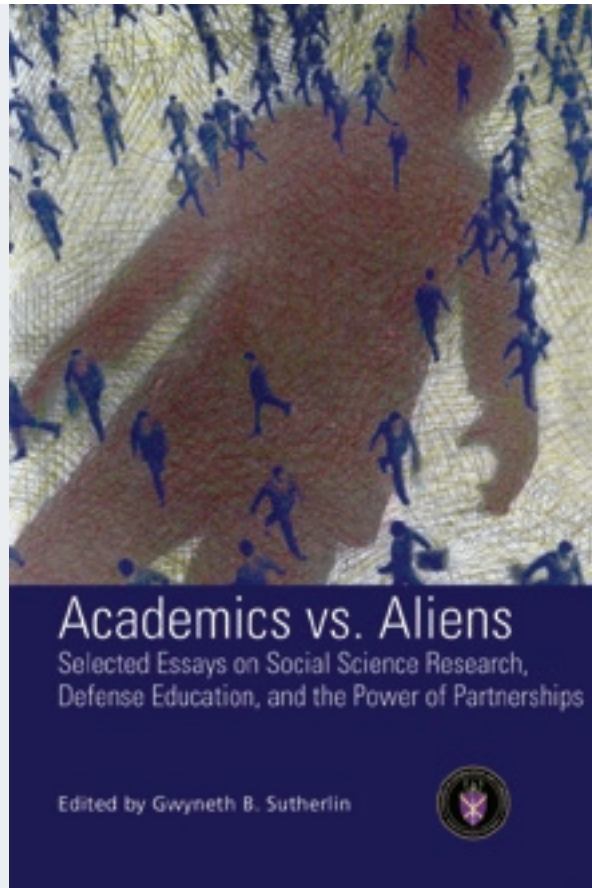
⁶⁷ Ibid., V-6.

⁶⁸ Ibid., V-9.

⁶⁹ Flavin, “Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success,” 96.

⁷⁰ FM 3-0, 8-1.

⁷¹ Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 567.



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