

Beyond Guns and Steel: A War Termination Strategy

By Dominic J. Caraccilo

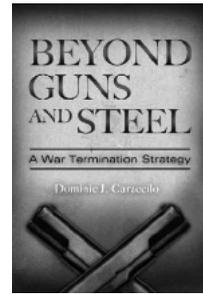
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As the United States continues to fight in the Global War on Terror over a decade after its start, Dominic J. Caraccilo's *Beyond Guns and Steel: A War Termination Strategy* is long overdue and a welcome addition to the literature on war termination and conflict resolution. Much too often in today's ambiguous operational environment America's national command authority lacks concise strategic objectives, which is why the United States unfortunately finds it is merely conducting crisis management, at best resulting in a murky transition from conflict to peace. Colonel Caraccilo ultimately hopes that with his words the "fog of postwar" activities can finally lift.

While Colonel Caraccilo led multiple Army units in combat during Operation Iraqi Freedom, he noticed that a fine line existed between the tasks the military was expected to perform in comparison to those under the purview of civilian agencies and locally elected governance. Needless-to-say, a plan that went beyond simply defeating the enemy was not established prior to the start of the war in Iraq as Rajiv Chandrasekaran, Thomas E. Ricks, Bob Woodward, and many other authors have since revealed in embarrassing and excruciating detail. Therefore, Colonel Caraccilo asserts nations need a *grand strategy* when it comes to conflict: clear and concise objectives prior to the start of actual conflict should become a required part of the planning process and remain an absolute necessity.

To arrive at how nations can determine these objectives, Colonel Caraccilo first describes why nations choose to conduct war and what events usually occur that ultimately affect how and when nations decide to end conflicts. Specifically, Colonel Caraccilo defines and provides examples of the six general categories that war termination rationale fall under as devised by B. G. Clarke in his rational model for conflict termination. Colonel Caraccilo then maintains that ten additional categories dedicated to conflict resolution, instead of only the six which address war termination, should also be used by nations during initial planning phases to include: nation building, economic development, humanitarian relief, and establishing democratic nations just to name a few. Next, Colonel Caraccilo defines in great detail many of the strategic terms used when discussing war termination, as well as briefly discussing how strategy, grand strategy, policy, and strategic communications relate.

Colonel Caraccilo offers "good" examples of when nations successfully plan war termination, conflict resolution, and definitive exit strategies as a part of their formulation and execution of national policy. Positive case studies analyzed include: the United States' Marshall Plan following WWII; Operations Just Cause and Promote Liberty as a part of American action in Panama; Operation Desert Storm; the Global War on Terror and its use of COIN theorems; Operation Iraqi Freedom; and even a non-US example involving Uruguay and the Tupamaro. Of



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course, “bad” examples are also needed to help prove why the fusion of war termination and conflict resolution is so vital: the Korean War; the 1956 Suez Crisis; the Global War on Terror and its focus on ideology; US involvement in Vietnam, Somalia, and Bosnia; and America’s on-going involvement in Afghanistan. After these case studies, Colonel Caraccilo reveals how interagency inadequacies in the US government are the primary culprits as to why war termination and conflict resolution are often overlooked. Hence, Colonel Caraccilo stresses such agencies need to better nest their goals and objectives to observe and realize how these desired end-states relate to the nation’s grand strategy. Finally, Colonel Caraccilo describes how extensive interagency planning teams are needed to define how and when military transition after conflict should occur, which will also simultaneously address the frequent absence of a fully developed approach to conflict termination within America’s warfighting doctrine.

Colonel Caraccilo’s chapter on definitions, as well as the extensive list of references used throughout the book, are some of his work’s most impressive attributes; if one wishes to analyze any aspect of conflict resolution and war termination, this is the book to refer to to find pivotal publications on the matter, and to fundamentally understand government agencies’ jargon. Yet some of his case studies are a bit confusing since they tend to weaken his overall argument. How can the War on Terror, regardless of what aspect of it is analyzed, be considered both a success and a failure? Plus, why is Operation Iraqi Freedom presented in the introduction as a massive failure when it comes to war termination and conflict resolution, and then placed in the success chapter regardless if new, effective leadership is what helped bring the longer than initially expected war to a close? Additionally, the entire chapter on the categories of war termination seemed redundant; if the six war termination classifications of B. G. Clarke are widely accepted, more emphasis should have then been placed on why Colonel Caraccilo feels so strongly his additional ten categories for conflict resolution are more important even if frequently overlooked. Had Colonel Caraccilo cut this portion, he would have also had more space to dedicate to further enhancing his subsequent chapters.

While Colonel Caraccilo did touch on the fact that resources frequently dictate necessity, he can and should analyze in greater detail and define what America’s current grand strategic objectives are. Only when those objectives align with nation building, establishing democracy, humanitarian assistance, economic development, and the many other conflict resolution classifications that Colonel Caraccilo presents, will money transition from one national agency to another, thus lowering some of the competing interests that various components of the US government have. Then, many more levels of the American government might actually feel compelled to work toward both war termination and conflict resolution if and when the nation finds itself at war, which Colonel Caraccilo correctly highlights as one of the most pressing issues facing both military and civilian planners today.