

Flight Lines

LT COL ERIC ASH, EDITOR

End-State Wargaming?*

LEADING OFF THIS issue, Congressman Ike Skelton advocates studying history to better prepare for the reality of the future. Complementing this theme, Matt Caffrey provides an interesting perspective with his piece on the history of wargaming. Just as we should not limit our study of military history to certain conflicts, in the mix of wargaming and history, so should we be careful not to wargame just the wars we would prefer to fight—rather than the ones we get. Effective military leaders will be students of both military history and wargaming.

Studying military history reveals that our ability to terminate wars militarily exceeds our ability to end them politically. Interestingly, we also terminate wargames militarily better than we end them politically. The interesting mix of military history and wargaming is important to the profession of arms. Each affects the other, but in a sense they exist in orthogonal planes. War is hardly a game, and wargaming certainly is not war. Hopefully, military history reflects past reality, but wargaming reflects potential reality—in the future or the past. Wargaming can also influence future reality and, consequently, military history.

Military history is full of painful insight about the end states of war. For example, due in part to the Versailles Diktat following World War I, that conflict certainly was not the “war to end all wars.” The aftermath of World War II was also enigmatic, leading to the cold war and Korea, among other prob-

lems. The Korean conflict clearly has not yet left us. The denouement of Vietnam was hardly spectacular. We are still heavily engaged with no-fly zones in Southwest Asia—as Maj Brent Talbot and Lt Jeffrey Hicks remind us in their article. And Europe is still haunted by the Balkans nightmare, despite world wars and air campaigns like the recent one over Kosovo—analyzed in Lt Col Paul Strickland’s piece on Operation Allied Force. Military leaders are well aware of war’s end-state dilemmas; yet, despite much focus on desired end states, historical reality reflects many undesired outcomes.

Wargames might also provide insight about ending war, but usually they do not. Why? The answer is that wargames support their intended objectives, and although many of them focus on desired end states of war, they are not specifically designed to do that—thus, in practice, they don’t. Typically, an educational wargame begins with growing political, economic, and social unrest in one or more conceptual theaters. Then the scenario builds, with increasing problems leading to open hostilities and consequent decisions to engage militarily. In this process, wargaming students concentrate on the difficult challenges of deploying, employing, and sustaining military forces—and hopefully learn something in the process. Unfortunately, however, learning often stops there and does not include grappling with issues about the desired end states after the termination of shooting.

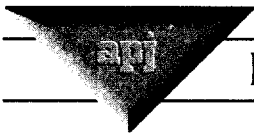
**Wargame*, used as a single word, runs contrary to current English lexicographical practice. But with an eye toward the German rendering of the concept in the single word *Kriegsspiel*, for purposes of simplicity in this issue of *APJ*, we spell the term—and its variants—as one word.

By the time most educational wargames reach the end state of war, students are exhausted and eager to finish (as are combatants in real war). Hence, wargames often terminate in a fizzle because students' minds are elsewhere, preparing to "go home."

What we need is specifically designed end-state wargaming, but one has to look far and wide to find it. We should begin conceptually with the war(s) already long into the fight

and the major focus of the wargame on the end—and beyond. This would provide the time and focused mental effort necessary to really work through the complex end state of war fighting, involving the myriad military, political, economic, and social ramifications.

As students of military history, how might we see better end states from war? Because wargaming can, indeed, influence reality, end-state wargaming needs to be a reality. □



Ricochets and Replies

We encourage your comments via letters to the editor or comment cards. All correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, Aerospace Power Journal, 401 Chennault Circle, Maxwell AFB AL 36112-6428. You can also send your comments by E-mail to editor@cadre.maxwell.af.mil. We reserve the right to edit the material for overall length.

PARTING THOUGHTS ON APJ'S FUTURE

My retirement in September makes this the last issue in which I will be identified as APJ's senior editor. To mark the occasion, the editor, Lt Col Eric Ash, has granted me the space to share some final thoughts on my two-and-a-half years with APJ.

I won't bore you with the usual platitudes: "It's been a challenging and rewarding experience" (it was); "I was privileged to work with some great people" (I was); and "The editor's a great boss" (I had the privilege of working for three editors, and all were outstanding officers and exceptional choices to protect and nurture the Air Force's professional dialogue). Nor will I extol the changes we have made to improve the publication's content and visibility (even though I am particularly proud of our recent accomplishments).

Instead, I wanted to leave you with a few observations concerning the nature of the journal and its future. For, in spite of the self-

congratulatory tone above, I fear that future is by no means assured to be a long or prosperous one. Does that sound alarmist? And, you may ask, how can it be so when I have just said that APJ is currently in good hands with positive trends?

I believe that the success of this professional journal results from a balance—perhaps *healthy tension* is a better term—between three major stakeholding groups: the editorial staff, senior leadership, and readers and contributors (with the officer corps as the main focus). *Tension* conveys the right image, as all the interested parties try to pull APJ in their direction. As long as these groups exert more-or-less equal forces in opposing directions, a rough—but hopefully intellectually stimulating—form of equilibrium is maintained. However, if someone pulls too hard or gives up—and if the resulting distortion is large or lasting—then the results can be catastrophic. This is no mere conjecture, as demonstrated by the demise of *Air University Review*.

What would cause the imbalance? Given competing and conflicting demands for time, it is easy to see how officers may come to believe that supporting or even monitoring the profession's dialogue is a luxury they cannot afford. More than this, both human nature

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