

## Letters . . .

### CIVIL AND MILITARY MINDS

**To the Editor**—I am writing in regard to the article by Richard Betts on linking the situational and fluid mentality of decisionmakers with more linear cause and effect ideas of military planners (see “The Trouble with Strategy: Bridging Policy and Operations” in *JFQ*, Autumn/Winter 01–02). Although the author does a good job of highlighting the basic issue of combining politics and war, he does not go far enough. In particular, the guidelines that he proffers for connecting policy goals with military operations are problematic.

First, Betts recommends estimating the culminating point of victory before combat begins. In other words, set your goals prior to fighting and stop when they are reached. For instance, it is suggested that if restoring the territorial integrity of South Korea had been established as a goal and followed, U.S. forces would have stopped their offensive operations after Inchon and avoided the march to the Yalu and Chinese intervention. This seems reasonable until one considers that combat can provide valuable data on the military balance between protagonists. From a political point of view, if war reveals that more stringent demands can be made, it would be unreasonable to fail to act on this new information. For instance, if this sort of advice had been adopted in World War II, the Allies might have terminated their efforts after securing Great Britain from enemy attack rather than going to Berlin. If Iraq had stopped its aggression in Kuwait when presented with the terms of the coalition in Desert Storm, its forces might have withdrawn intact and would present a much stronger enemy today. Sometimes sticking to original goals is not a good idea. Policymakers are unlikely to agree to quit when they are ahead, nor should they.

Second, Betts suggests that before committing to war there is a need to “decide the ceiling on acceptable costs and link it to the exit strategy.” The problem of cost ceilings is that war is often as much about bluffing as fighting. John Kennedy was playing poker when he insisted he would “pay any price . . . to assure the survival and the success of liberty.” If he had advertised that the United States would stop fighting after fifty thousand casualties, liberty might have been a good deal less successful. Beyond this point, as Truman and Johnson learned to their dismay, in the final analysis the ceiling on acceptable costs is really not up to them.

Finally, the author argues that there should be an exit strategy. Although I can’t argue with his point, I also must note that there are not many nations to which the United States has deployed troops over the years where they do not remain to

this day. It might be better advice for political leaders to develop governing strategies, then decide whether the war is worth winning.

Betts is right; civilian officials and military officers should put their heads together at every opportunity. Nevertheless, I’m not sure his three guidelines are the best place to start.

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### A COMPONENT COMMAND

**To the Editor**—Though the sidebar describing EUCOM in the *JFQ* Forum on “NATO, Europe, and Beyond . . .” (Autumn/Winter 01–02) does an admirable job of highlighting the command, its coverage of U.S. Marine Corps Forces Europe (MARFOREUR) needs to be corrected.

MARFOREUR is headquartered in Boeblingen, Germany, and not Norfolk, Virginia. It is the only Marine organization assigned to EUCOM; thus the statement that the commanding general of II Marine Expeditionary Force (II MEF) and his subordinates are included in MARFOREUR is inaccurate. Confusion arises from the fact that the MARFOREUR commander leads six separate commands: MARFOREUR, U.S. Marine Corps Forces

Atlantic (MARFORLANT), U.S. Marine Corps Forces South, Fleet Marine Forces Atlantic, Fleet Marine Forces Europe, and Marine Corps Bases and Stations Atlantic. Even though the MARFOREUR commander spends most of his time at headquarters in Norfolk, Marine matters within the area are charged to headquarters in southern Germany. As the MARFORLANT commander he exercises operational control of II MEF for the Commander, U.S. Joint Forces Command, he does not enjoy a command relationship with the Commanding General, II MEF, as Commander, MARFOREUR.

The MARFOREUR commander has parity with other service components in theater except for the lack of assigned subordinate forces. Accordingly, he advises EUCOM on the employment and support of Marine forces and conducts employment and redeployment planning and execution for either assigned or attached forces. Executing such tasks without subordinate operational forces distinguishes MARFOREUR planning efforts from other service components.

—LtCol Erik N. Doyle, USMC  
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